

BRUTIFUL OUTSIDER ART



CREATIVITY AS A VEHICLE
FOR METAMORPHOSIS

Brutiful Outsider Art

Compiled by Ginger Freedom

Authored by:

Dylan – Art saved my life!

M. Overcoming victim, growing through survive, achieving thrive!

Two perspectives written by my system's most active "front parts" sharing co-consciousness with the system's totality. This edition contains the first two episodes of the Patchwork Chameleon Chronicles as well as a third episode to the series.

Copyright Ginger Freedom 2016

Published by Ginger Freedom at Smashwords

Smashwords Edition License Notes

This ebook is licensed for your personal enjoyment only. This ebook may not be re-sold or given away to other people. If you would like to share this book with another person, please purchase an additional copy for each recipient. If you're reading this book and did not purchase it, or it was not purchased for your enjoyment only, then please return to Smashwords.com or your favorite retailer and purchase your own copy. Thank you for respecting the hard work of this author.

DEDICATION

Dedicated to my sisters, and all those in need of support within their recovery journey.

I am so sorry for your pain, your terror, your broken, wounded, ravaged souls.

My wish for you is THRIVE!

If you are working it, gets better – I promise.

Table of Contents

INTRODUCTION

Book Excerpt Review

Gratitude

Forward

Setting the Stage for Discovery

PART I. Dylan's Perspective

Prologue

Chapter One: Closet M

Chapter Two: Journaling, Poetry, Sketchbooks

Chapter Three: That First Class Back

Chapter Four: Creative Writing and Theater

Chapter Five: Her Dances

Chapter Six: Enrolling as Dylan

Chapter Seven: Out in the Community

Chapter Eight: In the Flow of the Moment

PERSPECTIVE II: M.'s Perspective

Chapter Nine: The Power of Memoir

Episode One

Patchwork Chameleon Chronicles Episode One: Quest

Dedication

Preface

Chapter One: A Slow Train Ride Home

Factors that caused Anne to question her past and seek answers to why her life was growing increasingly out of control, why two siblings had gone mad.

Chapter Two: Easy Like the Ocean

A snapshot of growing up with six siblings juxtaposed against a snapshot of Anne's present life as a dance maker and visual artist.

Chapter Three: Uncloseting the Chameleon

Anne divulges to a colleague, in form of a choreographic exercise, her diagnosis of DID.

Chapter Four: Consequences

Anne shares how sending draft chapters of her memoir results in destabilization of her system with her alters throwing a coupe wrecking havoc until she agrees to re-enter therapy.

Episode Two

Patchwork Chameleon Chronicles Episode Two: Kharma Krackers

Dedication

Chapter One: The Dominos Hold an Séance

Anne reflects on a near death experience, spiritual experiences, and answering to the call of the creative.

Chapter Two: Dark Night of the Soul

Anne discusses the series of events that led up to her first flashback.

Chapter Three: False Memory Syndrome: What is Your Guess?

Anne shares a letter to her first therapist and brings the third person memoir process to a close concluding with what is left to share, that she questions if she ought to share. Her life is in a very positive place.

Episode Three

Patchwork Chameleon Chronicles: Always an Asset – Never a Liability

Anne comes out of the third person and completes the story in first person, as

M., and reflects on the healing modalities that supported her journey, processing the final layer of trauma and deprogramming, the power of corroboration, and the challenges she faced in processing the final layer of trauma.

[Forward: Anne Goes Public](#)

[Chapter One: That Final Layer](#)

[Chapter Two: The Power of Corroboration](#)

[Chapter Three: Hello Buddah!](#)

[Chapter Four: Tools that Supported the Journey](#)

[Chapter Five: Thrive](#)

[About Ginger Freedom](#)

[Other books by Ginger Freedom](#)

[Connect with Ginger Freedom](#)

Book Excerpt Review

My thought was to chunk this project out in bite size pieces and self-publish through Kindle Direct Publishing, which I did, with two episodes of the *The Patchwork Chameleon Chronicles*.

5.0 out of 5 stars

Left me with a greater respect and understanding of the human mind and its capacity for creativity and survival.

Ginger Freedom's memoir is essential reading for all those who share an interest in the human mind. Freedom states that one of her motivations in writing the *Patchwork Chameleon Chronicles* is to provide hope through a narrative of recovery for others who likewise suffer from PTSD and experience Dissociative Identity Disorder (DID), but the scope of the narrative and poetry of the writing creates a work that transcends even this important agenda. As someone with very little knowledge of PTSD and DID Freedom's memoir was a truly eye-opening read. Freedom's memoir forced me to reconsider many of preconceived notions about mental health disorders, the ways we treat them and the destructive taboo that surrounds our discussion of them. I was left with a greater respect and understanding of the human mind and its capacity for creativity and survival. Moreover Freedom's writing was compulsively readable. I downloaded the book late one evening and read it all in two great gulps. In many ways Anne's story reads like mystery, in which the crime scene is the depth of the human mind and the stakes are truly life or death. I eagerly await part two!

By Tessa on June 5, 2014

Gratitude

In this moment I want to express gratitude for my cat Magnolia, my terrific tribe of family and friends, and the facilitators of my healing journey – in all directions of time and space. I would also like to say thanks to Tess for taking the time to write a few words about the first chunk in this project, Episode one of *The Patchwork Chameleon Chronicles* – it gave me the courage to continue. I am grateful for the patience of all the monitors and facilitators in art lab settings who put up with my exuberance, rebellion, and multifaceted way of being. Bushels of heartfelt appreciation for my devoted spouse, his family, and the angel art patrons who have supported my creative journey - no questions asked, out of love and care for me.

I would like to dedicate the process of collating all of this into its final book form to Susan and Sean from *The New Beginnings Center*. Without Susan's dedicated support, I might not have survived processing the final layer of trauma. I now have the skills I need to cope with any remaining issues that come up, for which I am grateful, and, I am plugged into good support as I complete this cycle sending this work out into the world in a larger way. I would also like to thank the brave survivor members of the *Ivory Garden* who gave me awesome counsel about how to manage specific triggers as I struggled with old haunts from the past. I am particularly grateful for the ideas provided by other survivors and therapists in Alison Miller's book *Becoming Yourself, Overcoming Mind Control and Ritual Abuse*. Thanks to Colin Ross for feedback pertaining to the likelihood of being done away with by perpetrators as I become more public with my story and lastly to Ellen Lacter for taking the time to point me in the right direction with regard to how to navigate the darkest waters yet. She provided me with information in terms of books that would be of good support to self-education myself. Knowledge is indeed power, and this, along with the power of trust and intuition, the faith in the process itself, the abundance of healing support that shows up when one commits to the process of metamorphosis: these textures enabled me to ultimately take my power back to recover from the impact of a nasty hand dealt in life. Lastly, I am grateful for the brilliance of the human spirit, the infinite wisdom of the human soul, and the breath of life itself. Somewhere from deep within this mix a wellspring of courage guided my daily quest for wholeness.

Forward

I will not fear, but rather, I will feel the fear and do it anyways

Dear T.,

I am not delusional, I am not psychotic, I ADORE my life and would never DREAM of ever taking it. I am embarking on a brave journey to integrate my story and toss it out into the ethers in hopes that this story helps others in that it is the brave telling of OTHER survivors that helped ME heal, the most recent, a brave telling by Wendy Hoffman (thank you!)

If I die or disappear, or the cause of my death is suspicious, if any of my loved one's want answers, the place to begin looking is _____. It is in this venue that I have encountered individuals that aspects of my sub-divided self report as "unsafe" and, we have, at times, feared for our life.

At this very moment, I am a work in progress, but enough has been accomplished that I boldly declare – this is as good as it gets. With great love and affection for your support!

MD

(a doctorate in self-discovery and healing)

I gave such letters to both my psychiatrist and my therapist as well as to a few of my closest friends. It was a part of a safety generation action plan intended to dissipate bone-chilling terror. For the life of me, I can't remember who suggested it – but taking this type of action did indeed make me feel safer. Another act of safety was to send an email to a psychiatrist who is renowned in the field to ask him about the probability of being murdered as I became more public with my life experiences by publishing my memoir, and he was kind enough to respond, which gave me confidence as well as great courage.

Correspondence Excerpt

Dear Dr. Ross,

I am a bit desperate and frightened at some level that these jerks may actually follow through with the insidious threats of the past.

Response

Hi - anything is possible, of course, but so far I have never heard of a documented case of a person in recovery being killed by organized perpetrators, so the odds are small that that would happen to you. I can't understand why psychiatrists are so keen to diagnose Bipolar Disorder these days, but it is certainly over-diagnosed.
Good luck.

Dr. Ross

The last bit of written correspondence with an expert, for this leg of the journey, was with Alison Miller, who advises not going public with your story unless you really feel called to.

Response Excerpt

I wish you well with your memoir. And I hope that you will not run into new harassment from perpetrators if you become more public.

Alison

F e a r

I came to realize that I was not so much afraid of death, but HOW I might die; at the hands of others, and now that I ground into the fact that this likelihood is nil, and I comprehend that past threats are merely derivatives of shadows, smoke, deception, lies, and the nuances of powerless victimhood. I commit to letting go of the fear of how I might die.

I REFUSE TO LIVE IN FEAR!

At some point one must decide, will you hide in the shadows, or will you step out into the light and trust the flow. In this moment, I refuse to be afraid of haunts from the past and commit to questing to live in peace, joy, and wonder with full awareness that fear is indeed a normal and natural part of the human experience. At present, I am aware, that to spite 22 years of recovery efforts, I still get triggered, experience flashbacks, and do experience fear; but not the debilitating type that causes me to reach for medication support, or cause me to take a bit of sick leave from work to process and stabilize. I affirm, *all of my triggers are processed; they hold no power over me. I am aware; I know what to look for, how to protect myself, and how to keep my system safe.* I do however choose to NOT play with fire, and move forwards with an under the radar action plan releasing this multi-year writing project out into the ethers self-publishing as an indie author under my pen name with no big fan fare. Those who need to will come across this, in that is the way of synchronicity and the wonder of the healing journey.

About this Project

This multi-year writing project is about scenting out answers, discovery, harnessing one's lifework to shift, and expanding into awareness of oneself and who one is within the container of the intriguing dream we all seemingly share. It is also a philosophical mystic's tale – one of me telling my story, or the story telling itself over a span of many years – from more than one perspective, in more than one medium, in more than one form – and what I

have discovered. It is a story that is kindred to countless stories in many places around the globe. Of the wretched abuses that take advantage of innocents, obliterate lives, and incapacitate others; while some manage to sort it all out - and come to a place of relative calm, peace, joy, and happiness even.

Until the cruel, colorless, vindictive and evil shadow aspect of the human condition is brought into the light of awareness, and we as a species decide that there are certain actions that are simply not acceptable stories such as this one are important to tell in interest of cultivating awareness. We as a species must take a stance and say NO MORE. I wish for the day where we as a species have sorted out how to give safe expression to the dark side of the human soul channeling this energy positively. By taking personal responsibility in my life to overcome and turn the darkest of dark energies into inspirational expression I believe I contribute to the process of humanity fulfilling its most poetic, wisest, and dearest destiny. It is a part of our evolutionary process as a species, to become aware, and to choose to dance in the light and become the light, nothing more, and nothing less.

My first reaction to undertaking writing about my journey of transformation was complete overwhelm. My muse suggested taking it on one bite size at a time. In 2014 the dancer in my system chunked out the first two episodes of her memoir. She pushed through the terror and self-published them, one episode at a time, sending them out into the world concluding the project at a place where she could tidily let go and never return to telling more. She priced them high to discourage buyers and continued on with some substantial creative projects including touring for a month long residency to Europe premiering an evening length work three years in the making at a national cultural institution with her art community. In 2016 I, as the visual artist in the system, wanted to tell my side of the story, and chunked out my take on my system's journey from my unique perspective.

The aspect of my system that penned the first part of the story wanted to release this as a stand-alone volume, but in that this project itself is a part of my system's recovery journey, she decided it seemed most growth-full to INTEGRATE the expressions into a single volume. In that this aspect has more experience as a "front part" in the world, I, as the visual artist in the family, have decided to let her structure this book in a way she feels is most effective. I would have preferred to open with my story, but understand it makes sense to open with the first bits chunked out. It is our hope as a largely integrated system that this work will contribute to the pool of resources that raise awareness about the effects of trauma and pathways of recovery.

I would like to begin this journey with transposing excerpts from a letter written by one psychiatrist to another in that it brings me great satisfaction to prove this dim witted awful diagnostician of a Dr. wrong. Five years into my healing journey I went through what I interpreted as what Stan Grof calls *the dark night of the soul*. I had a sleep deprived, food deprived, and terror

induced psychotic break with a one-week stay in a psychiatric hospital. The psychiatrist met with me once for five minutes and I was given an inappropriate diagnosis and put on some powerful medications. I was released to the care of a Mrs. J.A.

J.A., M.D.

January 30, 2002

“Dear Dr. P.

I assumed care of M. after her hospitalization at VDM for a psychotic episode. My personal opinion was that she had been delusional for years and was not receiving appropriate treatment. She has a family full of schizophrenics and affective disorders as well. As I reexamined her history I was less impressed that her psychotic episode was manic in nature, and stopped the Depakote. Off Depakote she reported that her brain was working better. I didn’t care for her over a long enough period of time to develop a firm opinion about whether she has schizophrenia, schizoaffective disorder, or bipolar disorder with psychosis in her extreme moods. She is bright and artistically talented woman whom I enjoy working with during her tenure with me.

Sincerely,

J.A.”

I am curious, about this woman’s remarks about family. To the best of my knowledge she never cared for anyone in my family and how infuriating to me for her to offer, “She has a family full of schizophrenics and affective disorders as well.” I always wondered about her last name - she has the same last name as one of the perpetrating families. I decide to not let my mind go down that rabbit hole, but still, I wonder.

Setting the Stage for Discovery

Presently, as a species, there is a tendency to place a high value on what scientists, researchers, and specialists purport as actuality discrediting healing modalities and sensibilities that aren't strongly backed by science. It is my observation that there are mysteries in the cosmos that go beyond our present ability to wrap our tidy little scientific minds around. We, as a species, attempt to understand the container in which we live activating our innate capacity to quest, seek meaning, understanding, and illumination. Bit by bit we've grown to understand the world in which we live, but relative to what there is to be known, well – it is obvious (to me at least) there is much left to discover. This notion is punctuated by a recent scientific discovery proving humans wrong on a particular count. It was thought that the human body had been entirely mapped. In July 2015, an article in [Nature Magazine](#), with a long list of authors, informed our species of the incredible discovery of a central nervous system lymphatic structure.

With regard to the universe, presently we don't understand 96% of it. Science writer Richard Panek states that "The overwhelming majority of the universe is: who knows? It's unknown for now, and possibly forever." With regard to the speed of technological development, analysts predict that the human species will not be able to keep up with it. Aviva Litan, a Gartner analyst offers "The problem is humans can't keep up with all the technology they have created. It's becoming unmanageable by the human brain. Our best hope may be that computers eventually will become smart enough to maintain themselves."

I found myself riveted by Jeremy Narby's book, *the Cosmic Serpent*, in which he shows how scientists are now qualifying, quantifying, measuring, and validating as scientific fact what some indigenous cultures have been aware of for eons: before the creation of scientists, experts, and analysts we put so much trust in. We measure our external world with devices and formulas of human creation as quantum mechanics suggests there may indeed be other dimensions/realities/universes. I can't help but chuckle at the obvious, who is to say the tools they are measuring with are applicable in these other orbits? But have at it we do, we as a species take great joy in attempting to understand the container in which we exist using tools relevant for this dimension, and perhaps not others.

My life work has been in large part about discovery, and I have discovered that much of what I needed to unearth lay within – an introspective journey marked by profound moments of synchronistic chance encounters that kept me safe, kept me evolving, kept me expanding in awareness as I shed layer after layer questing greater degrees of honesty and integrity in my life. I am a survivor of extreme abuse. I am at the tail end of my recovery journey. I am still in therapy but no longer have need of pharmaceuticals for

medication support. My present diagnosis is Post Traumatic Stress Disorder with associated conditions: Dissociative Identity Disorder (DID), formerly known as Multiple Personality Disorder, Depressive Episodes, Panic Disorder, and Anxiety. DID, in the psychiatric field, falls under the broad category of dissociative disorders. As with much of what human's quest to understand, much has been discovered, but much is left to discover. If you are just beginning your personal thriver journey be comforted by the fact that there is a great base of knowledge that exists and many victims that have overcome their past and exist as role models to us all. To set the stage for telling my story I would like to provide a very brief overview of my condition from what the specialists presently know, honoring, there is much yet to discover.

Post Traumatic Stress Disorder

For this project I revisit facts and literature pertaining to this terrain. I observe that there is a copious amount of information readily available on the Internet pertaining to the condition of Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) relative to when I was researching the topic for my master's thesis in 1994. The Sidran Institute, founded in 1986, which devotes its work to traumatic stress education and advocacy publishes a [fact sheet](#) on their website which gives a nice overview of some key facts in relation to PTSD within the United States.

“An estimated 70 percent of adults in the United States have experienced a traumatic event at least once in their lives and up to 20 percent of these people go on to develop posttraumatic stress disorder, or PTSD.”

“An estimated 5 percent of Americans—more than 13 million people—have PTSD at any given time.”

“An estimated 1 out of 10 women will get PTSD at some time in their lives. Women are about twice as likely as men to develop PTSD.”

In terms of an economic burden:

“The annual cost to society of anxiety disorders is estimated to be approximately \$42.3 billion (in 1990 dollars)”

With regard to risk, those at risk are identified as:

“Anyone who has been victimized or has witnessed a violent act, or who has been repeatedly exposed to life-threatening situations.”

Post Traumatic Stress Disorder does not discriminate. It doesn't see color, ethnicity, care which country your are from, what religion or political party you have an affinity for, what your profession is, or what your sexual or gender orientation is. The same holds true for conditions associated with Post

Traumatic Stress Disorder: panic, anxiety, depression, and dissociative disorders.

Dissociative Disorders

For years I've sought to understand the science behind what is going on in my system when I "switch" aspects of who I am. I've been curious about how memory is stored, how it is retrieved, whether or not memory is stored in the same fashion for survivors of extreme abuse that is ritual, or continued in nature as it is for those who have a single traumatic experience. Is it stored differently for adults than it is with children? What part of my brain lights up when different aspects of my integrated being are in executive control of the body having at what it is in the moment that is of interest. As I integrate, do the neural networks for these different aspects fuse and integrate.

The notion of disorder is perplexing to me, in that I don't perceive this as a disorder at all, which I'll illustrate with my story. The condition, at one point in my life, was debilitating, but I definitely didn't experience it as disorderly, chaotic yes – the creative process of remaking oneself includes much chaos, but there is order within the chaos, and an innate wisdom within the body to work its way back towards wellness if it has been broken at the hands of others. It is not at all disorderly. What needs to unravel, unravels in a timely fashion, if one's heart is open, and trusts what they can, to allow the journey to unfold: gracefully, painfully, and naturally (at least, this has been my experience.) I have reframed the concept of Dissociative Identity Disorder to Multifaceted Wonder Order and following is a very small bit of what the existing literature says about the condition.

I draw focus to researcher and healer Dr. Marlene Steinberg, who received 2 million dollars in support from the National Institute of Mental Health to study dissociation between 1989 and 1992. She developed the Structured Clinical Interview for DSM-IV Dissociative Disorders (SCID-D.) The SCID-D is considered the gold standard for assessing dissociative disorders. Her understanding of dissociation is detailed in her book, co-authored with Maxine Schnall, *The Stranger in the Mirror*. The authors provide the following definition of dissociation:

"dis-so-ci-a-tion: an adaptive defense in response to high stress or trauma characterized by memory loss and a sense of disconnection from oneself or one's surroundings."

This is the fun part; you'll see that you yourself, in some small way, experience what I do! It may not be *extreme* if you aren't a survivor of extreme abuse, but day to day living and the crisis that pop up in the course of living life, well you too experience dissociation – at least mild forms. It is a normal and natural part of the human experience. Dissociation is described as a "healthy adaptive defense used universally by people in response to overwhelming stress or life threatening danger." The authors contend that most people experience mild symptoms of dissociation as a part of day to day living. It is described as underreported because people do not know how to

identify the symptoms and that it is as common as depression and anxiety. The five core symptoms of dissociation outlined are amnesia, depersonalization, derealization, identity confusion, and identity alteration. The book describes the continuum of these core symptoms citing examples of normal, moderate, and severe states of each of the five core symptoms. The examples bring dissociation into a day-to-day living context, something anyone can relate to and I'd like to share a few and leave you to discover the book in depth if you are curious.

Amnesia

"Highway hypnosis" is cited as a normal form of amnesia. One is either engrossed in something other than driving, or very familiar with the road, and suddenly you wake up so to speak and realize you are at your destination. A student with a good memory who suddenly goes blank while taking an exam is given as an example of moderate amnesia while signs of severe amnesia include finding yourself somewhere and not knowing how you got there, not remembering months or years of your adult life, or forgetting a learned talent.

Depersonalization

Normal depersonalization might occur in a traumatic singular situation, such as an accident; one numbs their emotions, functions on automatic pilot, and it may seem like someone else is taking action to respond to the crisis. A moderate form of depersonalization is described as a "chattering monkey", a "nag" or "critic" as forms of the critical observing self that second-guesses the actions that are being taken. With severe depersonalization the victim of rape might feel as if they leave their body and float on the ceiling to observe what is happening to their body. There may be times when suddenly one's limbs feel bigger or smaller than they actually are, or one may have a sense of surreal detachment from one's physical body.

Derealization

The authors cite that normal derealization is brought on by "stress, fatigue, a hypnotic state, and alcohol or drug abuse." They describe a photographer who uses marijuana to relax. He gets a "dreamy buzz where nothings seems to matter anymore." He feels like he is in a world where his "senses are his only reality, colors hurt his eyes, time hardly moves and everything is slow." Moderate episodes of derealization are illustrated as not always feeling disturbing. An artist is described who draws creative inspiration from moderate derealization episodes: "colors take on a special quality." She can step back from the sofa and "see it differently."

Identity Confusion

An example of mild identity confusion is given of someone who reported that she didn't know who she was anymore after divorcing someone she had been with for 22 years. Moderate identity confusion was illustrated by a woman

confused about her sexual orientation; her heart fully realized in a relationship with a woman, but also longing to be married to a man in order to raise a family. Extreme Identity confusion is described as survivors experiencing a “battle or civil war inside.” One survivor, in a committed relationship, has an untamed wild aspect of himself that wants to carouse.

Identity Alteration

A mild form of identity alteration would be an airline stewardess who hunkers down to politely ask a drunk passenger to pipe down when she really wants to her vent her anger at the obnoxious jerk. Steinberg and Schnall describe how actors engage in mild identity alteration each time they play a character, as does a Dr. who treats a friend he encounters in the emergency room like he would any other patient. Moderate forms of Identity Alteration differ from mild forms in that the alterations are not always in the person’s control. This is viewed as characteristic of non-dissociative psychiatric disorders such as bipolar, when someone feels like two different people. One person when they are manic and another when they are depressed. Substance abusers may have a different personality when they are under the influence. A mild, well-mannered person might be completely different when drunk becoming angry, cursing, hurling things. When Identity Alteration is severe a person feels as if there is more than one person inside that controls their behavior. When an “alter” emerges the person may experience a change in vocal quality, posture, sexuality, hand writing, physical ailments, sexuality, taste, food preferences, dress preferences, or cognitive abilities. Unfortunately, in addition to solid information about DID provided by researches such as Steinberg, there is much misinformation that circulates in the ethers, and in my view, the condition has been sensationalized by the media to warp the condition into something freakish and un-natural.

I was delighted to uncover an article that weeds out fact from fiction in the field that was published in the July/August 2016 edition of the Harvard Review of Psychiatry. It is titled “Separating Fact from Fiction: An Empirical Examination of Six Myths About Dissociative Identity Disorder.” I pull a few key points that I found intriguing:

1. Researchers have found dissociation and dissociative disorders around the world
2. Individuals with symptoms that qualify for diagnosis of a Dissociative Identity Disorder (DID) receive treatment in the mental health system for 6-12 years before a correct diagnosis is uncovered.
3. Countries such as Turkey, China, and Australia commonly misdiagnose DID.
4. DID is NOT a rare condition.
5. DID is a trauma based disorder, NOT one that is iatrogenically created.
6. Older DID patients don’t appear to respond to treatment as readily as younger DID patients.

7. Humans have known about this condition for centuries. In this article that separates fact from fiction the authors point out “the first published cases are those of Jeanne Fery, 20 reported in 1586, and a case of *exchanged personality* that dates to Eberhardt Gmelin’s account of 1791.”

I’d like to hone in on number 5, a trauma based disorder, and ask the question, what type of trauma? If I am in a car accident when I am little? Or if I witness a horrible crime when I am 40? What? I enter into my favorite search engine “who develops a dissociative identity disorder” and the Sidran Institute answers the question in a tidy little fashion. I quote their generous information: “As many as 99% of people who develop Dissociative Disorders have documented histories of repetitive, overwhelming, and often life-threatening trauma at a sensitive developmental stage of childhood (usually before the age of nine). They may also have inherited a biological predisposition for dissociation. In our culture, the most frequent cause of Dissociative Disorders is extreme physical, emotional, and sexual abuse in childhood. Survivors of other kinds of childhood trauma (such as natural disasters, invasive medical procedures, war, kidnapping, and torture) have also reacted by developing Dissociative Disorders.”

The type of experiences that led to the sprouting of my very own *Multifaceted Wonder Order*, my term for DID, is known as *extreme abuse*. While other survivor memoirs share their stories of *extreme abuse* in vivid detail, this project traverses an alternate trajectory focusing on the vehicle of metamorphosis itself. To set the stage I would like to create a composite portrait of a survivor of *extreme abuse* sketched from information submitted via an online extreme abuse survey conducted in 2007. 2337 persons took the time to view it while 1471 persons answered at least one question. 1347 persons declared 31 countries and 124 respondents did not identify their country of residence.

TRIGGER WARNING

If you are a survivor here is your big TRIGGER WARNING! You may want to skip this altogether. If you choose to look at it, use your grounding skills. If you don’t have any, and you find yourself triggered. Slow down. Focus on your breathing. Square breathing works nicely. Inhale for four, hold for four, exhale for four, and hold your breath for four. Repeat until you feel calmer. Another good breathing technique I recently discovered is three sided breathing with you exhale twice as long as your inhale. Draw with your finger one side of a three sided triangle and inhale, exhale for the length of drawing the other two sides – repeat. Find something with a strong scent and smell that, something you enjoy. Notice 5 things you can see, notice 4 things you can touch, notice 3 things you can touch hear, notice what tastes you taste, notice any feelings you are feeling. Sit in a comfortable chair and focus on what part of your body feels most supported, give attention to that. If you have a squeeze ball, or a tennis ball, squeeze all of what you are feeling into the

ball and toss it away from you.

Rather than list ALL of what was reported I chose to zero in on what was reported by 50% or more of these respondents, and openly admit, this is me, my portrait is a part of this composite.

Being caged 53%

Being threatened with death if survivor ever talked about the abuse 77%

Bestiality 52%

Blinding lights 67%

Bondage 67%

Electroshock 50%

Forced drugging 71%

Forced to abuse other victims 55%

Forced to murder (or survivor made to think he / she had murdered) a baby 50%

Forced to participate in animal mutilations/ killings 53%

Incest 70%

Near drowning experience caused by perpetrators 51%

Non-lethal weapons abuse 50%

Pornography (child) 52%

Receiving physical abuse from perpetrators 86%

Sensory deprivation 61%

Sleep deprivation 69%

Use of blood in abuse 63%

Use of feces in abuse 55%

Witnessing murder by perpetrators 54%

Witnessing animal mutilations / killings 54%

Witnessing physical abuse by perpetrators on other victims 72%

Other abuse(s) 72%

As one might expect, being a survivor of extreme trauma impacts one's ability to work. When asked about their work, 30% were disabled, 12% unemployed by choice, 11% worked part time, 28% worked full time, and 19% were self-employed. In terms of possible after effects of extreme abuse, these categories were checked 50% or more of the time.

Art productions with abuse / torture themes 52%

Beliefs indoctrinated by perpetrator(s) 77%

Dissociative flashbacks with satanic themes 68%

Eating disorder 70%

Hospitalization in a psychiatric unit 54%

Migraine headaches 62%

Mysterious ailments for which a diagnosis cannot be made 60%

Painful body memories 87%

Posttraumatic stress disorder 89%

Self-mutilating behaviors 65%

Sexual urges triggered by feelings of threat, fear, shame, guilt, etc. 65%

Sleep problems 90%

Suicidal thoughts around special holidays, birthdays, etc. 71%

Suicidal thoughts immediately before traumatic memories surface 68%

Survivor guilt 73%

Unexplained bruises and wounds 59%

Unusual fears 85%

Other possible aftereffects of Extreme Child Abuse 76%

Within this category of extreme abuse there are two components relevant to my journey; that of mind control and ritual abuse and I would like to provide definitions for these.

Mind Control

By mind control I mean conscious manipulation of a person's natural ability to dissociate through psycho-torture to cause an individual to dissociate and create a sub-divided psyche in interest of carrying out nefarious activity desired by perpetrators that the individual would never undertake of, or even conceive of, of their own volition. That is my experience. There have been government documents declassified in relation to mind control, but I choose not to delve into that, and leave that to you, the interested (or not) reader. I also leave to you researching definitions provided by experts in the field. Of the memoirs I've read that contain mind control experiences I recommend reading Wendy Hoffman's *The Enslaved Queen* for a clear picture of the nature of the trauma. Her story was not my story, but it provides a very clear portrait of the nature of this type of extreme abuse.

Ritual Abuse

I use a definition provided by S.M.A.R.T's Ritual Abuse pages. "In a 1989 report, the Ritual Abuse Task Force of the L.A. County Commission for Women defined ritual abuse as: "Ritual Abuse usually involves repeated abuse over an extended period of time. The physical abuse is severe, sometimes including torture and killing. The sexual abuse is usually painful, humiliating, intended as a means of gaining dominance over the victim. The psychological abuse is devastating and involves the use of ritual indoctrination. It includes mind control techniques which convey to the victim a profound terror of the cult members ...most victims are in a state of terror, mind control and dissociation" (Pg. 35-36) "

This organization points to a resource that was of support to me a few years into my recovery process. This is their endorsement. "Safe Passage to Healing", by Chrystine Oksana, 1994, HarperCollins, which is an excellent source for survivor and co-survivors on the topic, though there is a newer edition out by iuniverse.com (2001)

Other Terms Pertinent to this Project

"Host" – by host I refer to an aspect of a sub-divided psyche that was not

conscious of the extreme abuse. This is the aspect that presented in life as “normal, happy, and well adjusted.”

“Alters” – this refers to aspects of a sub-divided psyche that were created to house the trauma

“Parts” – this is used interchangeably with “alters.”

And now I am going to toss a coin with regard to how to structure what comes next, which front part’s story to tell first. Dylan the visual artist, or Anne the original front part – the dancer, because we can’t reach an agreement on how this book should be further structured. Heads it is Dylan’s, tails it is Anne’s. Ha, ha, ha! Dylan wins which is totally not what Anne wants. Integration, we as a system and community learn how to compromise and I fully accept this may be me for the rest of my life.

Sources

Antoine Louveau, Igor Smirnov, Timothy J. Keyes, Jacob D. Eccles, Sherin J. Rouhani,

J. David Peske, Noel C. Derecki, David Castle, James W. Mandell, Kevin S. Lee, Tajie H. Harris & Jonathan Kipnis “Structural and functional features of central nervous system lymphatic vessels” *Nature*

<http://www.nature.com/nature/journal/v523/n7560/full/nature14432.html>

Last accessed September 9, 2016

Moskowitz, Clara “What's 96 Percent of the Universe Made Of? Astronomers Don't Know.” *Space.com*

<http://www.space.com/11642>

Last accessed September 16, 2016

SPACE.com Assistant Managing Editor | May 12, 2011 06:00am ET

Narby, Jeremy *The Cosmic Serpent: DNA and the Origins of Knowledge*
New York: Jeremy P. Tarcher/Putnam, 1988. Print.

Michael Liedtke, Barbara Ortutay "The problem is humans can't keep up with all the technology they have created" *Associated Press Business Insider* Jul. 9, 2015, 9:18 AM

Last accessed September 9, 2016

<http://www.businessinsider.com/the-problem-is-humans-cant-keep-up-with-all-the-technology-they-have-created-2015-7>

Sidran Traumatic Stress Institute “Post Traumatic Stress Disorder Fact Sheet”
Sidran

<https://www.sidran.org/resources/for-survivors-and-loved-ones/post-traumatic-stress-disorder-fact-sheet/>

Last accessed September 9, 2016

Steinberg, Marlene and Schnall, Maxine *The Stranger in the Mirror* New York: Harper Collins, 2001

Marlene Steinberg's resume

http://steinbergcenter.com/assets/MarleneSteinberg_resume.pdf

Last accessed September 20, 2016

Brand, Bethany L. PhD; Sar, Vedat MD; Stavropoulos, Pam PhD; Krüger, Christa MB BCh, MMed (Psych), MD; Korzekwa, Marilyn MD; Martínez-Taboas, Alfonso PhD; Middleton, Warwick MB BS, FRANZCP, MD “Separating Fact from Fiction: An Empirical Examination of Six Myths About Dissociative Identity Disorder” *Harvard Review of Psychiatry*: July/August 2016 - Volume 24 - Issue 4 - p 257–270 http://journals.lww.com/hrpjournal/Fulltext/2016/07000/Separating_Fact_from_Fiction__An_Empirical.2.aspx

Last accessed September 9, 2016

Sidran Traumatic Stress Institute “What is a Dissociative Identity Disorder”
Sidran

<https://www.sidran.org/resources/for-survivors-and-loved-ones/what-is-a-dissociative-disorder/>

Last accessed September 9, 2016

Extreme Abuse Survey

<http://extreme-abuse-survey.net>

Last accessed September 9, 2016

Stop Ritual Abuse and Mind Control “Ritual Abuse” S.M.A.R.T.

<https://ritualabuse.us/ritualabuse/>

Last accessed September 9, 2016

Part I: Dylan's Perspective

Prologue
I am Dylan

I love to make art and I consider myself an outsider artist

I see my art as “brutiful”

It continues to change as I change

It evolves as I devolve, rediscover, repurpose, abandon, release,
innovate, recreate

I eschew labels

Some of the contents of this might be pretty gnarly

Go slowly!

If you are a fellow thriver – CONGRATULATIONS! ! ! ! !

If you are a victim, don’t let those meanie weanies get you down, growl and draw strong boundaries. Stop being a victim and choose the survival path (my softer part says easier said than done tempering my tone – and she sends a big wave of empathy!) If you are stuck in a situation where you can’t escape, my heart goes out to you. My wish for you is that you will find your way.

For all the children (to borrow one of my parts phrases) who are prisoners within the war camps of your own childhood – I don’t know what the solution is, but set as an intention that this project will raise awareness that there are children who live in such conditions. My hope is that this one-day will no longer be. That every child is born loved, wanted, with amazing parents embraced by a community that really “GETS” them and provides them with the resources and the container of support necessarily to manifest their life work with great integrity.

If you are a survivor, keep working it, it just gets better, and better, and better! If you are a perpetrator I toss some ho’oponopono your way: I’m sorry, I love you, please forgive me, thank you. I wish that you become aware of your inner light and that you become liberating from your suffering, cleanse your soul, and learn to forgive and love yourself.

This project, for me, is process oriented and is not at all intended for anything other than a self-reflection of my journey as an Outsider Artist. The other aspects of my system have a different agenda. My contribution invites those curious about how art can save someone’s life to be a voyeur, a peeping Tita or Tom into my journey with hopes that you will find a bit of yourself in

these words and images and through the act of sharing my story - find release, comfort, courage, and inspiration even.

In the early years my art was an act of survival. I scribbled, scratched, and scrawled as an exorcism and liberation from a past I refused to let define me. Now, it is a celebration of life! This book project is mirroring a book project the dancer in the family is undertaking. It reflects upon our past two decades - a 20-year cycle of creativity. I believe it will help me better understand who I am as an artist and will provide a framework for what else seeks to be manifest in the short time there is left, in that more of my life is behind me than before me.

Enjoy the journey! Art saved my life! Art heals!



My first oil painting, before I received a bit of training. I actually like the work BEFORE the training better. But going to school and signing up and asking to be called Dylan and being me in class was a part of the journey. So I'll take it!

Chapter One: Closet M.

Truth be told, it is difficult for this facet of my totality to share a story about my system's experience with how art heals. This is MY section of this book - Dylan, 100% Dylan, but I am not much of a writer. Other parts write beautifully, but this isn't my facet's primary interest – although, in that I tend to blend with my other main front part, her abilities begin to infiltrate my orbit.

I am not all that interested in discussing how art heals, although I get this might be useful information to illustrate how. I am more interested in sharing the images and inviting you the viewer to take them in, as well as the stories they tell, stories that go beyond the personal into the universal – a bigger picture sort of thing. Do you have an owie of a similar tone? Then my hope is that my owie in charcoal or paint or words will be a nice gentle kiss on your bad owie. May what follows become a balm that soothes your soul and validates your unpleasant life experiences.

I interpret my art path as something I contracted to do in this lifetime. What I am about to share may seem very strange, weird, or foreign to you – but I feel compelled to share it nonetheless. I understood full well what I would experience, as a soul. It is my understanding that a soul can be aware in the womb, and my soul, as soon as it sensed exactly what it had signed up for; it attempted to go back to where it had come from not wanting to go through with what it had contracted to do. The door was closed, and as much as the soul pounded on it, it remained closed - it was too late, no going back, so go forward it did.

There was a recent “aha” that descended on our system that although sometimes “s-t” just happens, this “s-t” was, in part, me agreeing to burn off the Karma of souls in my soul unit that seemed to be stuck in a cycle. I somehow agreed to take on some of their burden and work through it by activating my inner code, my life work, and using that to help them out of the hamster wheel looping madness of making the same poor decisions again and again. This story somehow enabled me to accept the sum of my life experiences.

The art is art which at times draws from life experiences, and other times, it seems to seep deep into the collective interconnected underbelly of the human condition and lets expression come out that anyone who has experienced truly horrific things can resonate with, and hopefully, in experiencing the art, be able to find a bit of the themselves and know, it is all alright. Really. It is all simply o.k.

I would like to qualify this notion that I am 100% Dylan. I can no longer say I am 100% Dylan because I am connected to my totality, but sometimes I feel like I want to express as all me, and expressing as all me, I own that that also includes my relationship with my many different aspects of who I am as a

total whole. I connect in the moment with a thought from the aspect that spends the most time out and about in space doing stuff. I will call her M. in that a part of the integration process is owning that to be an integrated “multiple” one may retain different views on different matters, and different tastes, or spiritual or gender orientations. Sometimes we blend along with other aspects of our totality; sometimes we are distinctly in our own respective natural way of being. Experiences shape our identity. For some experiences one can rattle along through life “normally” and be conscious of day-to-day activity and engage in life with curiosity and great vim and vigor. For some experiences the body responds by compartmentalizing the experience in order to cope. Given a set of experiences, one compartment might be fully alive when activity of a particular nature is occurring, while another compartment is asleep and completely unaware of what is happening. When the experience stops, and “normal” day-to-day activity occurs, then the compartment shuts down and sleeps and the part that experiences “normal” flow wakes up. Two very different orbits, and given the two different orbits, different senses of identity as well as orbit views develop. If the journey one is going through is particularly rough, one might create many, many compartments and rooms in response. Not all of the compartments and rooms may share information and knowledge of each other with each other.

A very complex system of inner communication occurs. In order to heal trust among the different facets must be gained, liaisons established, and bit-by-bit, the walls between the different compartments come down which results in a blending of the system. What is interesting to me is that even when the walls come down, and there is action/reaction/interaction, differences in taste, opinions on certain matters remain. One grows to accept these differences of needs, opinions, views, and compromises in character occur to support the overall sense of safety, love, and satisfaction in the family. In my case, for the first layer of recovery, I was once part out of some 35 splinters and parts housed either solo, or in different groupings– which much of this book is associated with, and also some 35 splinters and parts housed in different groupings, or as stand alone parts for the second layer of recovery, which interestingly enough – did NOT channel much into the visual art. That layer was too gnarly for expression and I used somatic therapy, journaling, the voice, and different techniques such as TAT, tapping, meditation and mindfulness to process. The energy felt too dangerous to express safely through the medium of dance. I find that fascinating.

As Dylan I feel very much like I have strong male energy, my thing is art, while M. doesn't identify with any gender at all and is asexual and her thing is dance, writing, poetry, and being a conductor of sorts of all parts of who we are (in collaboration with me.) There is the distant nuance of an aspect that once identified as gay male that was absorbed by the system, there are female aspects only female when they were used in the past for their perception of being sold for sexual favors or used as bait. The being sold for

sexual favors, oral and anal, was corroborated by a sibling not so very long ago when we had the courage to exchange notes after two decades of silence between us.

I became Dylan because in my awareness my father would dress me up as a boy. I don't want to go into the details of the experiences between us because to spite the confusion of the communities he fell prey to, the conscious little tomboy, M., couldn't help but love her daddy – she wasn't aware of the other sides of daddy. The thought M. offers is a dim memory of being in graduate school, and being allowed to drop in on a philosophy class (some sort of critical thinking course), and getting to know the instructor. I allow myself to blend a bit and let this aspect share this piece of information.

At that time M. had parked herself in a graduate program to pursue an MFA with her thesis stated as “I Intend to Heal” and let her quest (I like that word) to heal from PTSD serve as the framework for much of her activity there. She took an inter-disciplinary approach to her education and spent time with filmmakers, actors/actresses, directors, musicians, as well as dance makers and dancers. This teacher of the philosophy class listened intently when M. spoke of how nuances associated with torture and trauma skirted word. He sagely offered her two very good observations. ONE: there are some experiences in life that go beyond the scope of the human experience as well as human expression and TWO: as an intellectual, the academic system is misses that a person's life work may be wrapped up in manifesting one singular pivotal work, and how inane it was to publish just for the sake of publishing. I wonder in this moment, if this is my singular work and after if it is complete – my work will be truly done.

Somehow this was very important information for our system with regard to art making, the healing/recovery journey, and giving expression to the horrific things that were being brought to conscious awareness, again and again, from the different perspectives of the different aspects. Art became a way of telling, processing, and alchemically transforming dark energy into universal expression that gives voice to those stories that go beyond words.

I would like to begin with what comes up first in the flow. It was actually AFTER graduate school, and I had already been active in life drawing classes as well as continuing with the dance maker's journey trying to figure out how to start up a dance company. I took to painting. Around 1995 is my guess. I generally don't like to sign or date my work in that I feel as if these are expressions that have flowed through me. I feel a sense of stewardship, not ownership, and I think the way that the art market works – well, it seems really weird and unnatural to me, so I choose to not engage and identify myself as an “outsider artist.” Most of what the art world is about does not resonate with me, so I give myself freedom to create outside of it, and react/respond to it! I flip it a big ol' fat birdie! But that is who I am.

Dylan the rebel child who used that energy to defy the many perpetrators – names and faces that are still too taboo to me and I shut my eyes tight so I

don't have to see, know, name – but I do know some, clearly, distinctly, vividly: Father Rudy and other priests and some Catholic nuns (or people dressed like nuns), A. Forey, (whom a brother on numerous occasions declared she was a W., a real W., and that we had a weird bond), people dressed up like Dr.'s, policemen, undertakers, my immediate family, people in my father's communities – military, engineering, golfing even, people and families in religious communities, an educator in High School, and a host of others that parts identify as a part of the community of hurters that they don't know for absolute certain, in trauma time, people who look like the past become the past. The creative work is also a way of saying "f" you to them. You lost and it has been a win-win for me, my tribe, and also for others who are survivors of extreme abuse.

Early in Life

Early in life the host in our system took art classes in high school, as Dylan, I wasn't active in the system, nor were my abilities tapped into. A part of the indoctrination that passed through our consciousness was trauma that, in effect, was designed to strip the system of power, or any sense of self worth, or value for that matter. For instance, seeing that the little girl loved to dance, and was enrolled in some ballet classes, she was tied up with ropes, and told she was crooked, and would never dance. The dance classes stopped shortly after they began. What remains is the vivid memory of a sugar ballerina on top of a birthday cake and winning a prize for being the best 4-year-old ballerina coming down the diagonal imitating a butterfly. It was interesting, when the host began to dance in college, there was so much fear moving across the floor. People in class would ask her what she was afraid of, and she didn't know. My guess it was the fear around the trauma of being tied up in ropes and told you are crooked and you will never dance. It was interesting for the dancer, later, to be in physical therapy, and the physical therapist stating, your body makes no sense how it is organized, the patterns of tension and such. I think this was a reflection of the locked trauma in the body, the tension held there, tension holding the body in the alignment associated with the extreme abuse.

Whether that was literal or figurative being tied up with ropes, my other front part M. says "I don't know", but the net effect was to shut to shut the dancer down. The little girl also wanted to play piano, and there were some mock lessons where her fingers were hurt by the piano lid coming down on her hands, in attempt to shut down the part of her drawn to music. When the music part came out, Phillip, he had no language at all, and communicated in music. After these incidents I chose to not let on about my interest in drawing. I did what my brothers did, drew funny monster creatures that were popular. I figured I was safe. I chose my name because I overheard someone say they hated Bob Dylan, and I decided I would give myself that name out of spite for

the evil people doing drastic and horrid, I mean horrid things to the system. Some of it, we learned later on, was trickery, but for the parts that were drugged and in their fight/flight/terror state, they believed it was actually happening. At least that is how it felt in the flashbacks.

As someone who has moved from victim, to survive, to thrive, I share with you how my life work as an artist became a medium or metamorphosis. The effects of extreme abuse from multiple perpetrating sources definitely influence my early work as an artist. It became a safe form of “telling”, a way to get the toxic, evil, dark energy out of my body and into a form that is universal. Presently, what flows through me seems to be much lighter, and even whimsical and playful, which in and of itself is a tremendous testament to how far I’ve come in my healing journey. Okay, now it is time to share some art and as I work at refining this chapter I feel the deep embarrassment M. feels, shame, unhappiness even, that this is our story.

Following are my first PTSD Paintings. After M. received her MFA from a pricey private arts college there was time to experiment with oil paint and mixed media.

Mi Madre Rages – my version of The Scream

Oil on canvas.

Obviously an expression of rage. Rage I witnessed, rage locked up inside.

Sitting Un-Pretty

An expression of being shell shock in a drugged, dazed, horrified, terrified state. This surfaced when flashbacks and abreaactions were occurring that I relate with extreme trauma, some of them, ritual abuse in nature. Just stuff passing through with no attachment to the subject matter. It just was what it was, and with processing and release of the trauma through art, the flashbacks would abate, and I would be all that much freer.

Plate Three: War Path

Mixed Media

Oil, toothpicks, condoms, nails, gesso, glitter, sandpaper, sand, canvas bag
This work, unfortunately, when our system was more in conflict and raging against each other was destroyed. There is a Native American Indian figure as well as an angry figure whose face is covered up with a canvas bag. It reflects the hell of kids who are prisoners in the war camps of their own childhood.







All Parts Paint

After finishing a few oil paintings I decided it might be helpful to take a painting class and went to the local community class to enroll as an art student. Integration is about “driving the body” and I took executive control of the body and went and enrolled in an oil painting class. At the class introduction part I asked to be called Dylan and each time it was time to go to class I became the main front part, with my then distinctive way of being and vocal intonations and enjoyed being fully me. When I think of the kindness and encouragement of some instructors I liken to them as little helping guides with open minds and open hearts welcoming troubled souls without judgment – well, at least MOST of the teachers.

Our system’s main front part M., felt a lot of frustration over the struggle amongst all the parts of to “drive the body.” She understood that a part of the process of integrating entails normalizing different aspects to day to day living by allowing for them to have executive control of the body and do what they will when they are at. As the host, or front part, M., would let go and allow for this to become co-conscious, recede to the background a bit, and observe the activity. It is actually quite restful, and I think a key to how I have managed to DO so much in life. I see D.I.D. as a tremendous asset, not a liability that is for sure. I think it is a contributing factor to why I am so prolific as well as so proficient at so many things.

In this class, paintings mostly got messed up, as one facet of the self would take control of the body and paint over what another aspect had created. The brilliance of the teacher at that time - he suggested that I paint from one portrait and then let each aspect paint their self-portrait from this initial painting impulse. The portrait was from the book cover of an autobiography of Beatrice Wood. I was riveted by the image, not knowing at that time that I would take to pottery and clay forms, I saw myself in her.

Much of what flows through me sort of makes itself and truth be told, even I as Dylan was surprised by the different portraits that emerged as different aspects would inform the process to paint their personal portraits. It was like magic! They just seemed to paint themselves through the lens of my sub-divided self. To this day, I still have different styles of painting as well as drawing, which I think is pretty cool! M. titled the series "Closet M" for closet multiple. Early in our process a dissociative identity disorder was more commonly known as a multiple personality disorder. This notion of disorder is a pet peeve. I like what M. calls it. A MULTIFACETED WONDER ORDER! It is the MIRACLE that enabled us to stave off very difficult things until the body felt safe enough to bring all of the little horror stories to conscious awareness. A foundational element was being embraced by a container of love and sensed safety - that is, having someone in my life (Mr. S.) that cared for me, and loved me enough to be with me through ALL of the recovery process.

Well, not all, but a good portion. It just got to a point where he couldn't cope with it, and that is perfectly understandable! He said, no more stories, no more telling, I don't want to know. I shudder to think of others who experienced the same sort of things, and have become debilitated, and they continue to live in suspended hell because they do not feel safe to begin processing. They don't have support. They don't have a Mr. or Mrs. Or Ms. S. lovingly devoted to helping one get through the worst of it.

This series was first shown as an installation with each painting hung from a different type of hanger at a Women's Center at a nearby university, and then later at a small black box theater as an installation component before a 40-minute choreographic work by M. The series was recently brought out and displayed for an Emerging Genre Installation a part of an international arts festival series, which I, as Dylan had the great joy of directing all by myself (just the installation part - not the whole festival!) Without further adieu, following are paintings from the series.



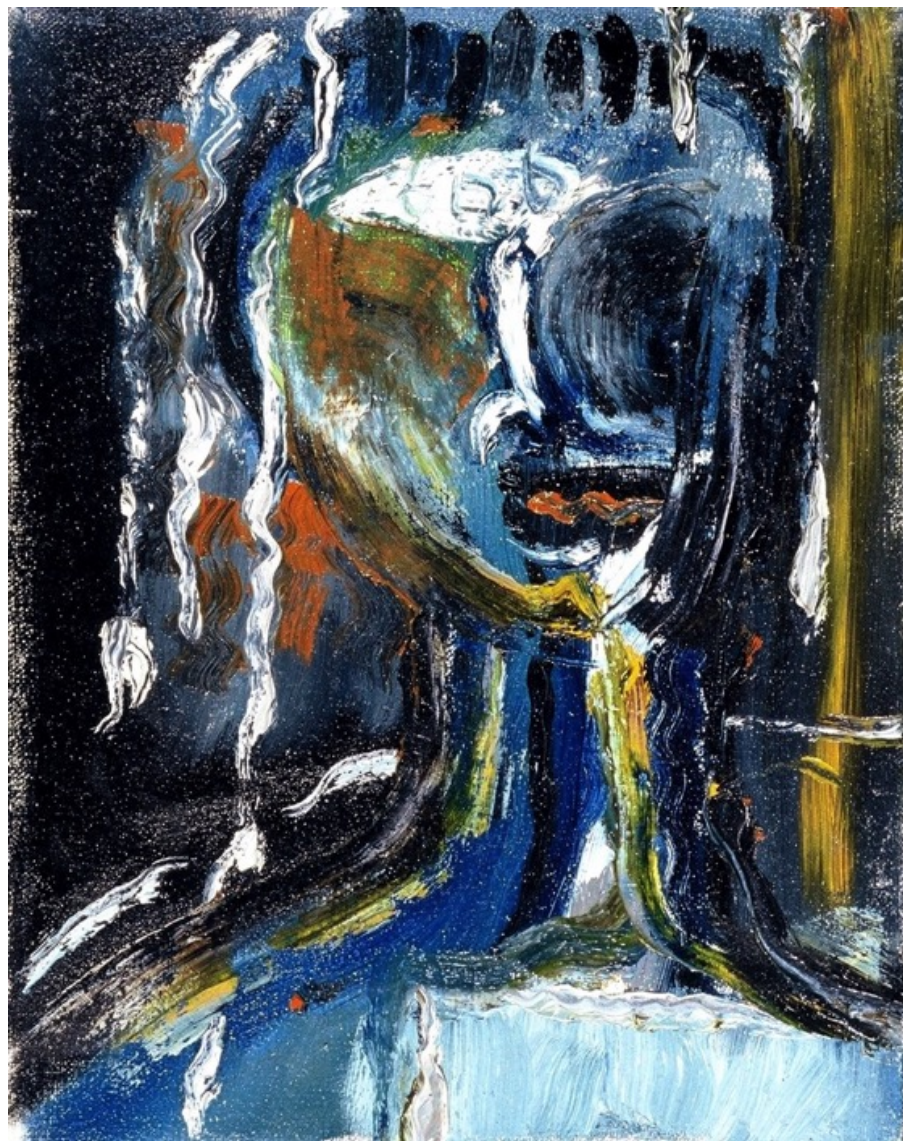














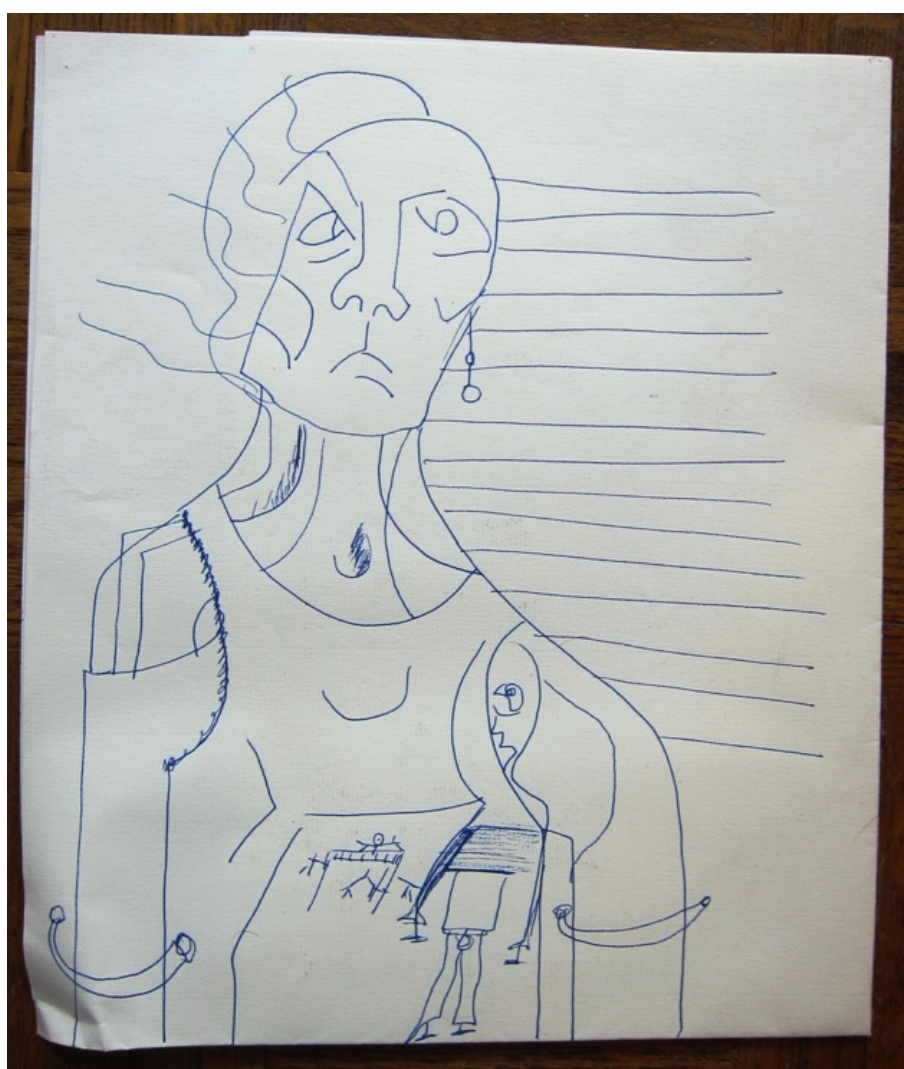




Chapter Two: Journaling, Poetry, Sketchbooks

Journaling informs the creative process. It is the ultimate act of intimacy with oneself. It is a place one can go that is totally private where one can dialog with oneself, sketch out memories, scrawl out emotions. For many seasons we had a daily practice of morning pages taken from the book *The Artist's Way*. One begins each day with a blank piece of paper and writing non-stop. It is an excellent way to clear negative energy and makes room for the type of creative energy necessary for digging deep in the creative process. It is a great tool to have in between therapy sessions when issues are surfacing for processing, to jot down the different perspectives of the different parts, or to dialog amongst the different aspects. That is REALLY helpful; to hold a counsel and let different aspects share what is going on. In this section I would like to share a few images from my journals as well as some of the journal entries that illustrate what it is like to function with a sub-divided self during the initial struggle of getting to know each other and express conflicting views, thoughts, feelings, and emotions.

This was a loose-leaf sketch, a self-portrait, and shows the perception of self as divided, with the front persona represented as a mask of sorts. The pinning on the arms reflect being tied down against one's will. The figures inside the figure are aspects of the sub-divided self.



This is from a journal when we first began processing, and the sub-selves were beginning to introduce themselves to the host, or front part, M. My first drawing of myself which shows a lot of hurt energy, bound up. It a picture of myself I drew for M. when she asked me about who I am.

Another.

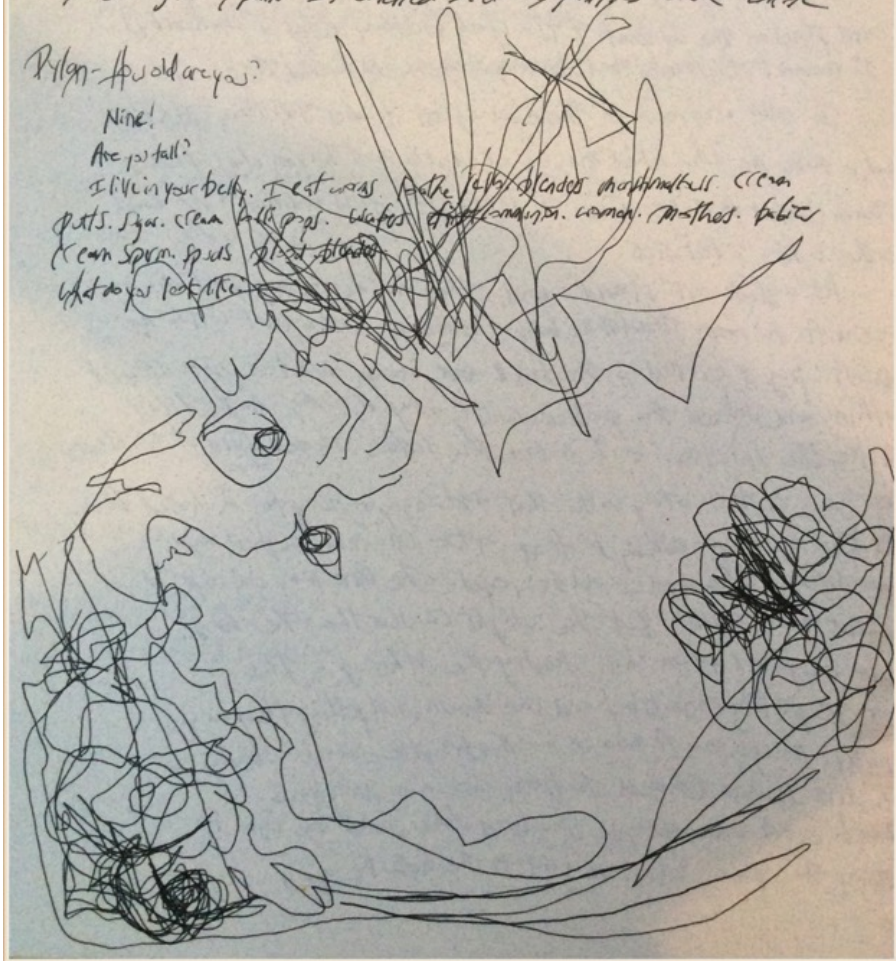
In the other dream I had had diarrhea like baby diarrhea & kept shitting in my pants. It smelled bad my pants were white

Ryan - How old are you?

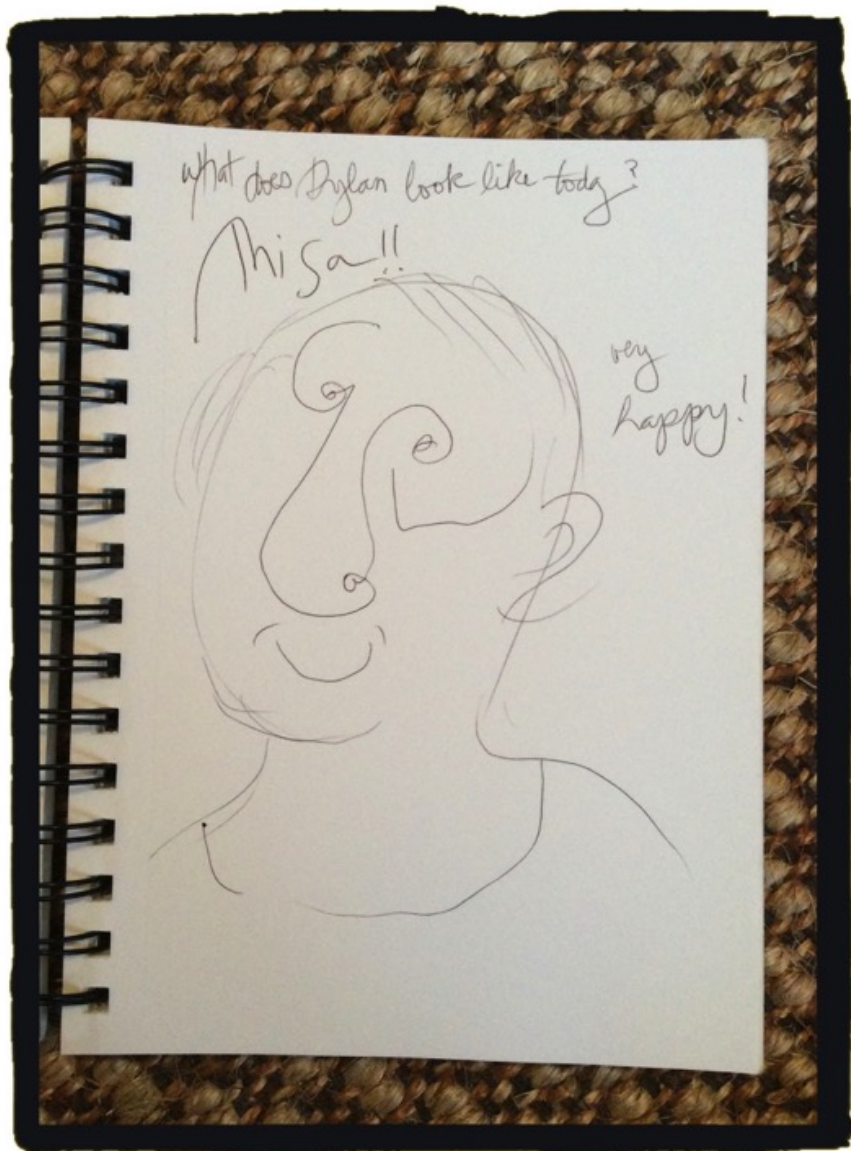
Nine!

Are you tall?

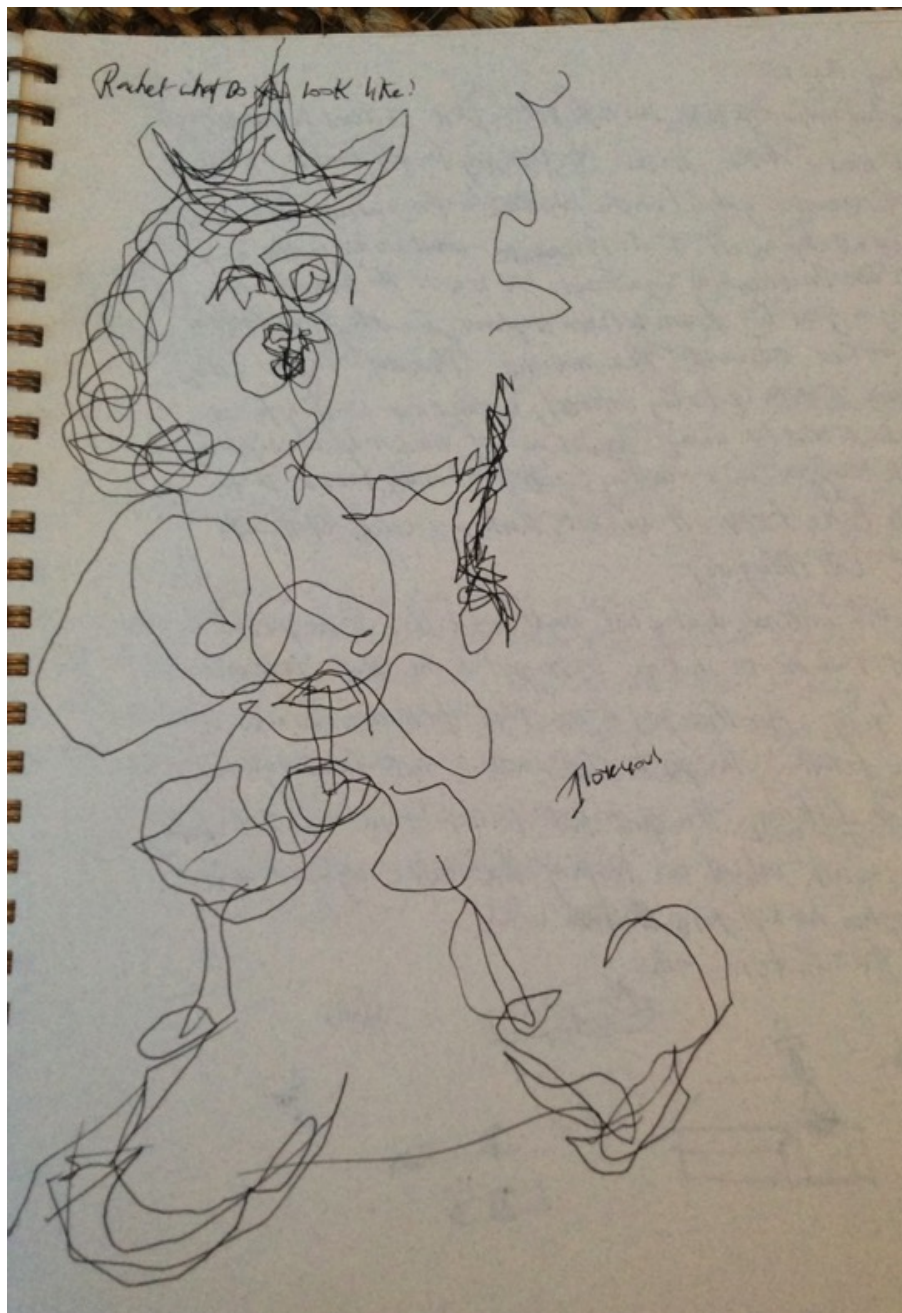
I live in your belly. I eat your fat. I eat your blood. I eat your marrow. I eat your
puts. I eat your cream. I eat your piss. I eat your diarrhea. I eat your vomit. I eat your
I can spin. I can spin. I can spin. I can spin. I can spin. I can spin. I can spin. I can spin.
What do you look like?



This is a journal drawing of me from a year ago. It shows the growth and progress towards wholeness and happiness. Obviously a very big difference – 22 years of very, very, very challenging work! It acknowledges that the system is identity fluid. Happy!



This was from the early, early work – and depicts the aspect that was active when being forced to partake in secret ceremonies that were really, really, really awful. Rachel and her memory of wtch and stnsm. I don't even want to spell it out. Why give those turds energy?

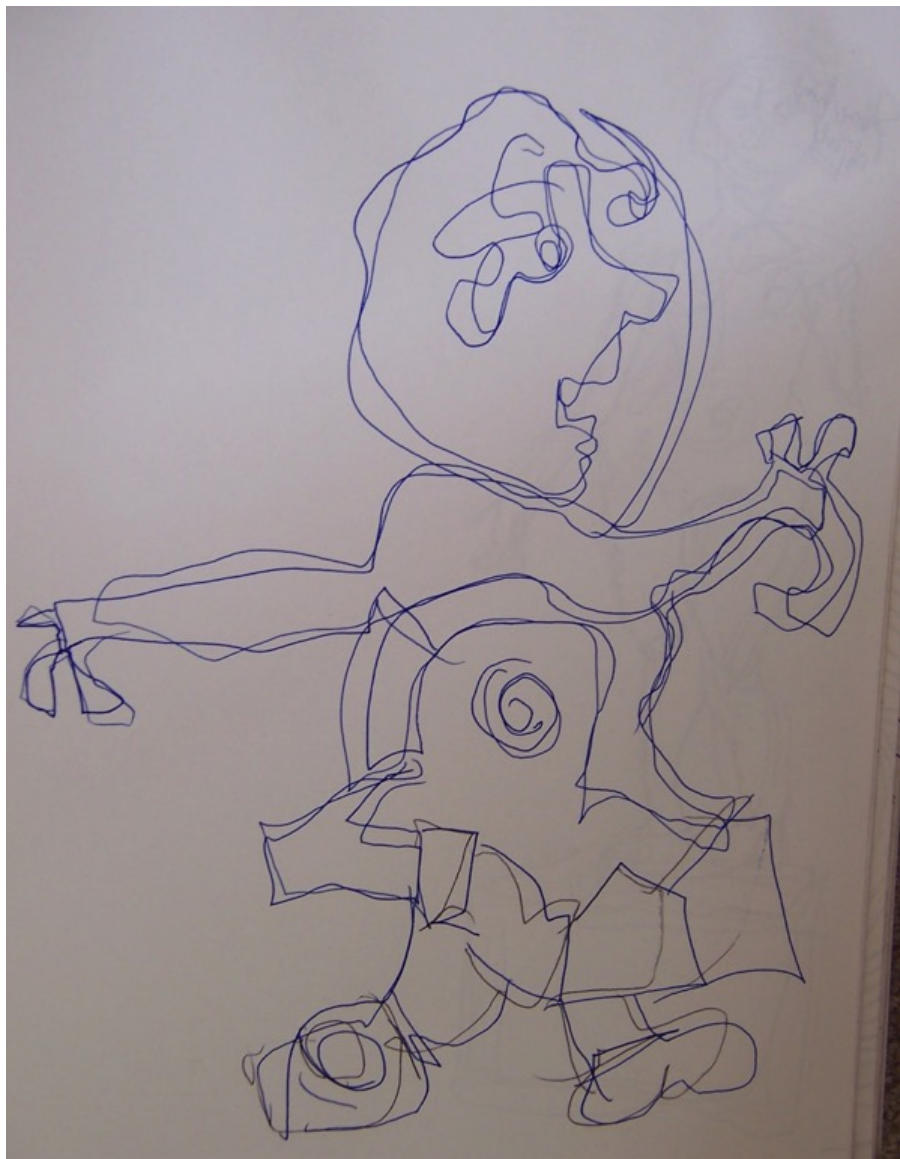


Not all images in journals were charged with the past, this one was a romantic depiction of the my then knight in shining armor being my rescuer, which has shifted, our system doesn't need anyone to save them any more. We fixed it with support of loved ones, art, family, friends, and therapists.



Shortly after graduate school, where my thesis was, *I Intend To Heal* (it took much longer than two years of processing through creativity, which is for sure.) I was on a self-made artist sabbatical in New York, trying to decide if I wanted to move there. I was too sick at that time and decided to stay where my support system was. Just yesterday M. decided it was a good decision to NOT move to NY to pursue her career as a choreographer. It forced her to learn how to be a groundbreaker in her own community and that comes with its own satisfaction and internal rewards. The next two images are from the many sketches on this journey.



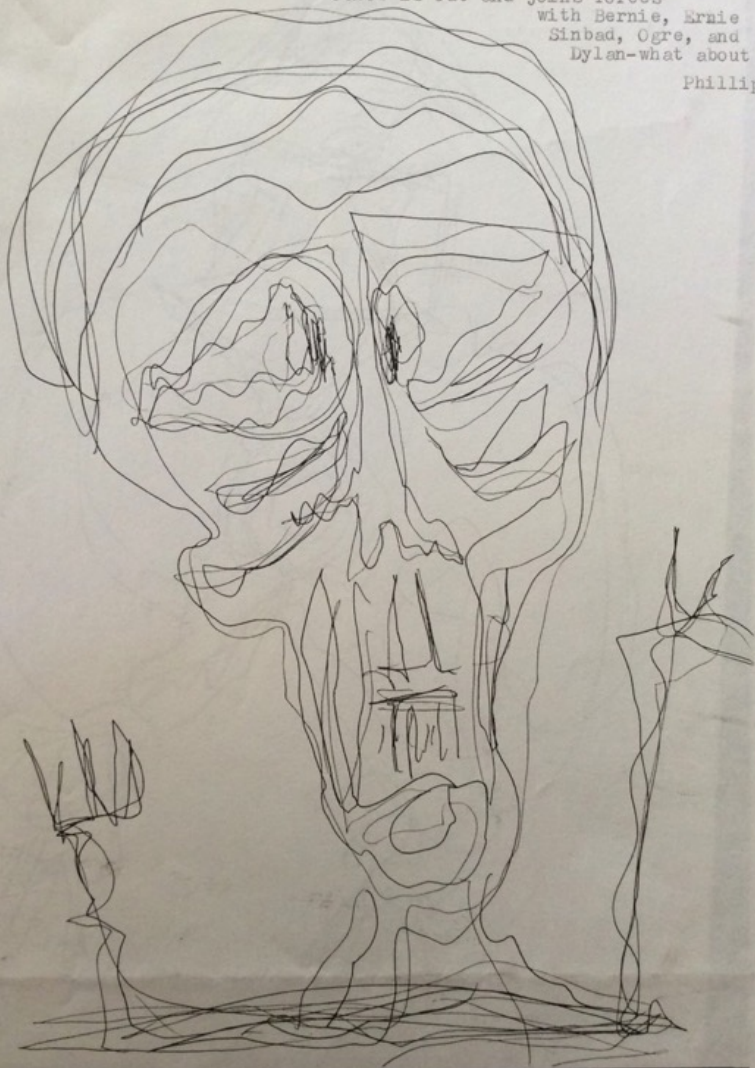


The host, or front part, always liked to think of the system in terms of different colors, and not get caught up with names, but for the different parts, identifying our sense of different selves was important – and from time to time we'd draw the system out. With integration a sense of identity with names tends to drop, especially if parts blend, or merge. To this day I do not know where the names came from.



In hindsight, I am grateful for these saved bits and pieces, it is a record of how hard the system worked to recover and is a celebration of how far we have come. In the integration process different parts get absorbed into different parts – in my system at least.

Jacob is out and joins forces
with Bernie, Ernie
Sinbad, Ogre, and
Dylan-what about
Phillip?





Hard even now tell – this show memory of fish hooks being put in body's privates. This sentence good example how different parts have different mind ability. Some write better.

She drips down and is made to wear nothing

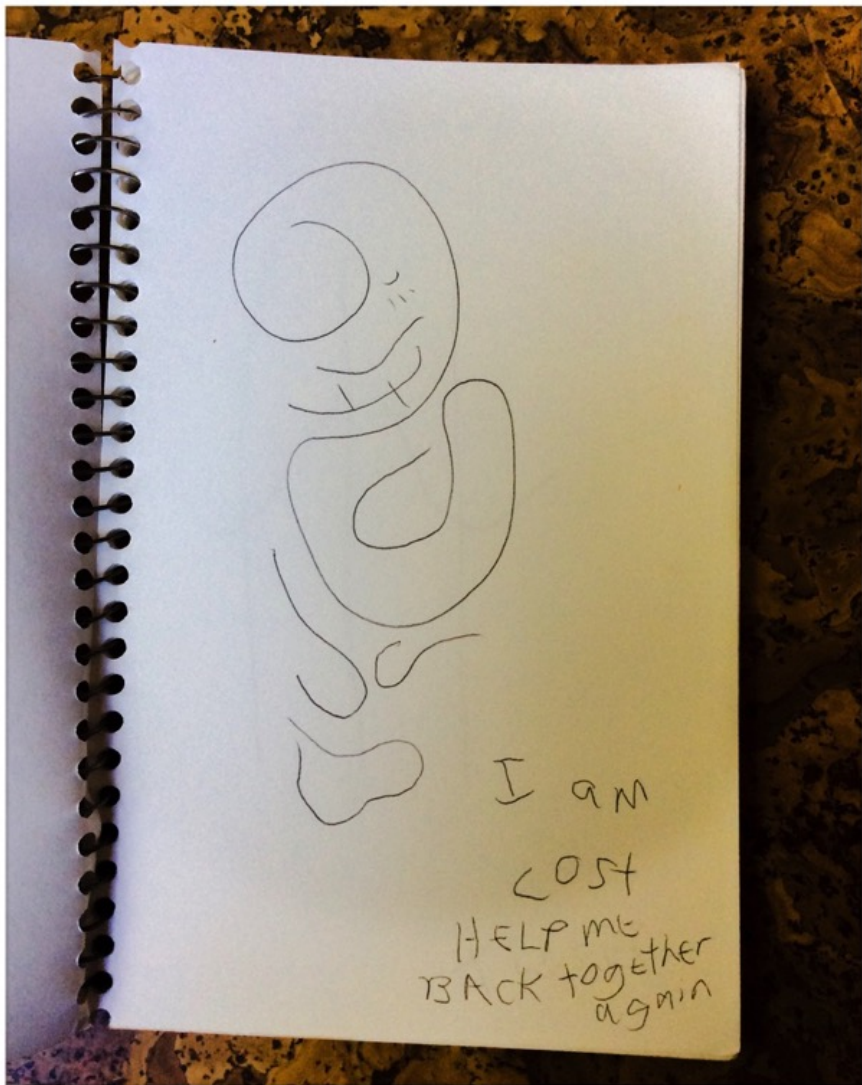
But service shoes

Bite me!

So glad we never have to do that again!



While at one point we expressed being lost – I am so grateful to not feel lost any more. There may be some fine-tuning, and new information that surfaces along the way, but I consider myself whole!



There are gobs of images and drawing and bits and pieces of writing in my journals, but I think just a smattering of things is probably more effective than inundating you, the kind reader, with the images. If you would like to see more images from inside sketchbooks, as a means of letting go, I created some short book meditations that integrate positive thoughts and present imagery intended to foster hope in those struggling with their process. The photography juxtaposed against the images helps to soften the raw quality of the images. They can be found on this playlist: <https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLr6Ll1cpwV9lrTld3MwAfnxHs10lYqNd9>

I can type
I wear my socks to match my shirt
I don't know what day it is
I have a short atenshun span
I notice I like a different hanger than the puzzle piece that
Organize the closet.
That I type haerd
That I spell somewhat different
My eyes feel big
My breath is not much
That I eat peanut butter
And
Most important
I fold my sock s in a way misa not know how.
With the pony folded to show.
We/I is smart
My name is jacob
Goodbye computer
I like misa
She let me out
I am a link to the boys who talk to rachel
who doesn't like chatty cathy chatty cathy is close to the
relligious people
I am one who went to mountains and (omitted story) on rusty bed springs
Goodbye
Gym go now
I back from gym and gave M. body good work out.

She never sweat. we make her sweat and work heard I notice a pretty girl. We stay in girls gym so we can watch girls. We notice M. not a pretty girl. She has wrinkles on her skin and her eyebrows are messy and her face is pouchy and she look grey not healthy. She not drink water. We notice M. not look in mirror. We notice M. not look up but down. She not want to stay and dance. We make her and she happy after. We give her will..her will is broke... we give her some of ours.

I want to put the name tags back on for awhile. Marketability of process...short while. We want to each know our own flavor in the world... and then..maybe...we'll come as one. I don't think people understand us.

I think depersonalisashun is something that happins win a voice repeats not yours and it is like a lie voice that comes up like an echoe automatic. Like when we wash our boy undiys and the voice said..don't wash that little...was stephen's voice...in our mind...like an echoe that come up each time you go to do something.

M. mind is out less and less..we out more and more...she said...she

around 40 years..now our turn...goodnight...bye bye M....go away now!!

December 16, 1999

I notice on the bus yesterday..the toddler out..what it must feel like to be a toddler..and wonder..loving to feel gravity..weight...bones bouncing. Value for dance.

Rachel come out and talk to the doctor. She met a friend She going to send a card to Meg to say thank you. She like her. Nice when go for pap smear. Very scared. Told her family doctor in cult....

Walking up..we felt M. let go. And we out..

She tell s. she losing control.

She in denial about being multiple. That part going away. New part coming out. Not M. Need new name. Want name to be minnow. Want to have new life.

December 18, 1999

Wow. How has time gone by so fast? I notice things. Today. I am the most conscious...who is I? The M. & Co. character. And someone tells me that I am more I because they have joined the team. This integration stuff. Two different worlds. The one that never cut off. The one that cut off. Or was the one that cut off the one that (I am angry w/S.). Someone is really mad. Who which part is that. We want to write to all of our old therapists. Make up a multiple card and Xerox it. From copies of our old journals. WoW! These are new M. thoughts.

She try to write but we take over. Happen more and more we take over. We are the real I . She quiet more and become the inner voice. We are the outer voice. It is about wearing your insides on the outsides. I think today I rather work on other stuff than go to dance class. But M. need to dance. What is best? I see image of G. gym in the afternoon not ballet. Is this right? Yes! Someone say. This is right. Go to G. gym. More better. Stretch here this morning. Play tablas, draw, go to gym then go drawing. I is happy today.

M. tell me what you notice?

We notice she hear us but we have hard time hear her. Why is that? We dream that DK give up her business and move north. Why is that? We need more time at gym. We work on financials this morning budget time. M. notice/ she notice we more healthy. When presenter out...link to shit fuck voice. Depersonalization...how do you personalize depersonalize?

Merry Christmas Everybody!

This is everybody.

We are here today to thank you.

We were once suspended in time in a web of something that takes art to describe.

We had no access to a voice, we had no access to a way to

communicate our story.

You have helped us tell our story.

Without yourself the organism we created as a shell would have gone
To the grave without knowing we existed.

Without knowing our story

Which is her story.

It feels so good to be me.

It feels so good to have moments in the day where I take a long break for a long stretch of time. The other day, I was conscious for only 1/2 an hour, and my "kids" managed just fine. My bread & butter gig, it's a miracle, I can't believe the bosses don't notice when the young one comes out and begins chirping about loving to sharpen pencils and she decides to not ask the boss if he wants his pencil sharpened because he might notice. Or, being on the bus, and a "baby" alter growing up, toddler age, dangling feet over the edge of the bus seat, whacking heels against the edges, loving the feel of motion, observing what it must feel like to be that age, and having difficulty walking. Letting my testicles dangle so to speak at the aerobics studio at the gym and inviting the boys to come into my dance ritual. Noticing the inability to use my arms, the frozen back, neck, and awkward, precise, linear way of being. Noticing the boys rise up to face the big boss at work and talk "man to man" about gleaning information off the internet...and noticing a bit of shock on his face...knowing that I have in the past often been the timid one...who would take, do, accept any sort of abuse...because that was all I knew. And now, the boys know how to deal with him and respect is being generated somehow...he likes it when the boys are rough and tough right back. Roaring...letting go...knowing it is best to not hang on...but let me be all of me...learn from the mistakes...and suffer/celebrate the consequences. So much, too much, really. The struggle with the suicide part, it has no power anymore (seemingly) it has dissipated...and I can't quite put my finger on the reason why. The coping mechanism issue, the more I let go and allow the alters out...the less power they have over me. I notice that the "depersonalized" shit fuck voice...is not an alter but something that is stuck in-between it all...it is nothing but words...and it comes out when I am the only one conscious...and it is in response to speaking out, being all of me...and I notice that the rage is turned inward...and now that the coping mechanisms are losing their power...or I am choosing health...I must find a way to turn the rage out...and I don't know how to do that...and I wonder who will help me with that...
Gotta go now. Not sure what the day will hold. Gotta let go and live life...and trust essence as a rudder...to guide me all about!!!

Love,

M.

Parts reply – illustrates how M. had a different view about Christmas than us

We are not going to celebrate Christmas. We are boycotting this year. That is our choice. We don't have to if we don't want to. We are going to remake the holiday and call it a day to be thankful for winter. Which is time for sleep. And when we sleep we dream. And when we dream we have nightmares. And when we have nightmares we are awake. And in our waken nightmare we walk backward in time with our eyes shut and come out into daylight blinking our many eyes and blow out the light. We have brought another inny into the outtie world but we never forget the link to the inny world but grow to understand the nature of the nightmare. Fear turns a different color. The different color repaints the nightmare. Our perception changes. And we find that what we were looking at...was really only ourself...like a magic mirror...the grimace was really born to be a smile..the scream of pain...is really meant to be a scream of ecstasy...and we are balanced in the middle and know peace...and explore the outer extremities for gathering wisdom, knowledge, and it cultivates compassion. The most precious thing a human could have. Compassion. And the compassion lets us make the journey with others. Down under.

Before we know it.

It is spring

And the garden that comes up

Well...you can guess what sort of magic happens then...

Cycle

Starts

Again

DIALOGS/Tiffany letter to S.

M. observes as she helps format this part that she feels so much shame around Tiffany. I think shame because Tiffany is the part that went out and found a male friend for the parts that S. said he did not like.

Dearest S.,

I have nothing to give in this moment but my most passionate thoughts and impressions of present time. Your poetic attitude and kind sensitivity are very dear to me. You speak with such eloquence and impart depths of wisdom that surely measure beyond the fathoms of the sea. When you touch me the touch goes equally deep and stirs the still waters in which I often swim - a pool gathered by the shedding of lonely tears- counted - one by one - held - one by one - dropped - on by one - and although it seems as if in sorrow I perpetually bathe knowing you alchemically transforms the sorrow to joy in moments of trusted touch.

I love you

Deeply

Passionately

In this moment

Following is a bit of prose I would like to give you

It's a lonely journey, a heroine's journey. Things go on inside that the upper crust never seems to be clued in about. Conferences with the big man personified as Jesus or God or Buddha or Shiva or Mukti or Bakti or Krishna or Self. The upper crust is a semblance of something and we chip away at the marble façade bit by bit. Life and vitality or wholeness makes its way into the serpentine veins and the cold hard shell glows with translucent light. Hard to move limbs, frozen stuck in time, that fucking tick it reminds us, constantly- that we are stuck.

Unsticking is a long process.

But the under-crust doesn't seem to mind...suspended in the space between the audible markers...casting bets on how many we count before we float free of it all. Gossamer threads, silk threads, unseen threads, drifting mindlessly, easefully, blissfully, the breeze just enough to cause movement to cause light to glisten to cause rainbow energy to surge. Who is our divine weaver. None other than the self...projected behind us...projected before us...projected to the north to the south to the east and to the west. Inward directions guided by the pause between the inhale and the exhale where absence of light the potential for being resonates in harmony with the celestial chorus of stars reminding humanity that we are bright. Oh so bright, and that light never fades but grows more audible as the inward ear grows keen in sleep's stillness - the last wave hissing in the sand. Drawing us back deeper into sleep, the foam at the edge. A coy simple signifier of how fleeting manifestation is in the cycle of life. Dawn to dusk and Back again. Tiffany

Catatonia – entry by M.

Interesting, how we forget how hard it was, and times when the body was “frozen”, catatonic, and couldn’t move. I wonder about the damage. I’ve been aware of paralysis with regard to realizing dreams, and the world becomes grey. Working on rescuing my hard-core group. “Mr. Hiss”. When he came out, I dropped it, the denial. I thought, after a session of co-conscious story telling. There is no way that I could have made this up. Beyond the realm of possibility. Try and try and try. All sorts of excuses, anything, but to have to admit that it really happened. So queer to me. Those outsiders would pass

judgment, and contend that survivors make it up. I don't know about other survivors, I only know about myself. All of this stuff came up as a consequence of wanting to know "why". Seeking "why" since my early twenties. "why" for the eating disorders, "why" for my siblings eating disorders, suicide attempts, bouts with mental breakdowns.

The first attempt to tell the story, M. (the host began, and parts took over)

In re-reading this, I have NO IDEA how we managed to process and work through all of this, and achieve the state of fluidity, cooperation, and harmony that we have today. Although there are still kinks being worked out, I just have to write. WOW! If I can do this, so can you!

During this period, I was still a part of the charismatic born again Christian movement, the type that would lay hands on the sick, cast out devils, speak in tongues, read the bible, memorize scripture verses. A very very very good cover up, now that I think about it. A very very very very good way of putting someone in a mental state where they would never ever question the community as the root of evil...the ultimate "why".

Paradoxically, it was an experience of my mother, a story she told me... that led me to the edge that I stepped over...which led to the utter transformation of my being. I don't remember the story word for word, but in essence, it was a spiritual awakening that came about when she decided to ask for truth.

I came to a point where I couldn't take it anymore. It seemed like the more I prayed, fasted, memorized scripture verses the more out of control I felt. I began to have a voice that felt disconnected from my body blurt out without my being able to control it. My husband identifies that as my Terets sort of self. The voice would shout in hushed whispers self-abuse and phrases of self-punishment whenever I would begin to reach out to other people and be social. I understand now who that was, and their role as protector, but I was clueless back then.

We want to tell,

o.k.

tell

well, when M. or A. (birth name) was just well, when the body was just a baby, in the womb, things started to seem kind of iffy...we/i/she/he remembers an attempt by the "mother" to abort the "baby"...

the fatigue the "mother" must have known, as a parent to three boys, one after the other, her husband out on the West coast looking for work, playing it up with the "wahinis" at the beach with "uncle Joe".

I was almost born in the back seat of a cop car...and my grandfather came to pay the bill to get me out of the hospital...my father wasn't around.

I don't remember Utah...

I don't remember much of Long Beach...

I as host began to really have memories in Whittier.

I was never home. I was a tomboy. I chased my three older brothers. All of a sudden I had awareness of my sister Michelle, although I don't remember her birth, she was born in long beach, and I had awareness of my sister Jennifer's birth.

Hmm...

Fights, constant fights, my father beating my mother, my brothers, my sisters, me, my mother in a rage screaming at my father. We were good Catholics, we went to church on Sundays, and I always had this sad sort of feeling for my mother. There never was a bond between us.

Stage ONE:

6 months of constant dissociation 2-3 body memories a day

Video images

Body pains

Smells

Single incidents

No family association

Cult memories came out

Multiples came out

Stage TWO:

Memories 1x a day

gosh-I don't know today we remembered a very big owie and we no, dylan who is we minus one or two, no all of us, dylan told the story and told the parts where we switch

This Stage:

Memories come back with awareness of when switching happens.

Have bits of memory. Terror. Gaps missing in-between. Not sure what happen in-between, maybe no need to know, notice that we type better and our english we mean I as dylan or us or dylan speaks for all of us with more better, with better command, M. help there, command of the english language

Integration happening, we are happy for that, we all feel represented, we feel like awareness of all, little baby need time to catch up, come out mostly when upset, come out with food, nourishment. We glad to be out. We scared

of S., we are afraid of being thrown out. But we like M. idea. Treat home like own home, fix-up make nice, make special, never have special clean home, glad m. think of that, want crib to sleep in, want blanket, maybe make feeling of, safe, start, m. good mommy, m. good daddy. We not afraid, we happy. We wonder why things hard, things good. We no too scared. Tomorrow new job, be patient, must get food ready for lunch. Maybe eat lunch out tomorrow for fun. First day. *WOW WOW WOW! Whew...Am I ever glad all of that is behind us!*

January 17, 2000

WE tell story of tabla lesson M. went to tabla lesson. She very frustrated because the good tabla player (mikey/phillip group) not out. We try to all be together. M. no play tablas good.

It was so hard, I was really angry, frustrated; I spent a good portion of the trip screaming out my hatred for men. I had spent the morning with my friend K., and was enjoying the company of women, I don't ever remember really enjoying being around women, it felt really different. So I screamed and screamed. And was misdirecting until I started to zero in on my father, that felt good. The kids, or my alters, hadn't been out much, it felt like I had acquired a greater degree of integration. I was so pissed the past couple days I went out and bought cigarettes and smoked like a chimney. I wonder if going back to yoga is bringing up stuff.

We like go see K. She fun. She have dog. She good, very good to us. She tell M. she very together, she should be proud of that. M. go home and experiment, make list of what she doing last 4 years by category. Notice, no remember between us, different activities, different parts, first time try to look at big picture. Good for her. She see we been working hard. Look like nothing when see one world at time. See progress when look at big picture (rachel/dylan)

Hard know who we are anymore...changing as we connect with each other...

So, at tablas..

M. start playing, get very frustrated. The dyslexic one..he share co-consciousness which mean he play the opposite of what we supposed to play...& M. hands do something else than what her brain say. Or another part out at same time is thinking it is a different section, the one ahead instead of the present section, a misinterpretation of time. M. frustrated, crying, angry. She say she hate us. Hate the process. We understand hard.

I felt really awful for expressing hatred for the process. I felt like all thumbs, and it was so frustrating, to be the subdominant in being conscious for the past entire year and a half in music class, and enjoying the ride of this really talented part of me.

Don't forget tell. M. let me, Phillip play piano...me making song up for M. dance!! Me going to record my songs, me happy happy happy.

At one point in the tabla lesson I could feel myself finally getting what was going on, and I heard the whole group cheering me on, hey look M.'s starting to get it...go M....and I messed up...Tiffani came out...and the group commented on how good her attitude toward the drum was, someone else came out didn't know why they were there and what they were doing...and the body stopped playing altogether.

I tell M. later...when I take executive control. We happy..she went to library herself to get kids books...and we take that as a signal o.k. to come out. Anyways, its really really really nice to have something to be good at that M. is not...it like I have a card in the card game that she want, and she might swap me.

Switch, I notice when I close my eyes, the jerk of the body, it is also like seeing a wave of a deeper shade of black. I was also really frustrated, and the embarrassed red faced feeling comes up for writing this.

No tell...M. out most of week!! She got to use her body for 6 days!!! She very happy. We stay out of way to let her dance. We start skull next week. We understand why our language way is. (kids closer to nonverbal which is closer to origins which is closer to wisdom that exists independent of perception. Kids see clearer sometimes the bigger picture, and forget, because we don't approve of the visionary capabilities of human, we mark some parts of the brain as o.k., and some uses of the human potential as taboo, because it un-shrouds mystery, and fear keeps us from embracing the truth of our identity as beautiful beings)

No..what about the journals I made? M. is really happy with me. The organization seeps into her other areas of life. She could never do that, or really let that part out. M., she let go of having to be in control and let us out to notice things. She notice that fatigue sometimes can be a way of suppressing what you really want. Joy, pleasure. This year when she ask her inner angel what to focus on she very surprised by the answer joy. She had a flood of very fun, joyful memories, of playing in the fields, the butterfly on that landed on the top of a tin can, riding her horse, I no remember now...long string of them..

Yeah (M) the list seemed never ending. I was really surprised. Couldn't quite figure it out. I think another reason the kids hadn't been out much was having to work 9 hours on Thursday and 6 hours, nonstop flights, no breaks... and getting work done.

Sigh.

Back to other stuff.

Hard write

Resist tell.

Fatigue is the old person dying, depression...a new person wanting to come out. The new person can't because of fear...the old person they perceive

what they want, joy/freedom as bad..if the new person doesn't get out, the organism as a whole begins to die without the rebirth

The deeper one goes into a process, the less likely you are to remember what happened. Like dreams...what happens is best depicted by nonverbal signification, because that is the manifestation one is forced into...language is a signification designed for interpreting present time/moment/what we can see touch, feel, hear, taste, comprehend with what we accept as acceptable receptors given level of collective awareness...that is why sometimes words of different parts are stilted...short...stutter...reflecting communicating from the dimension not really present time...but dreamtime.



Jacobs rule

Those who don't work & share their knowledge don't get to have out time. Goal: all parts make connectors so all parts have all talents and all disabilities at same time! Parts in dreamtime. Image of dream-dreamtime-place of no words. Deepest place hardest write. Torture forces soul/spirit/consciousness into dreamtime. Certain experiences keep us in this manifestation. Extreme body conditions push to dream time. Body signals for soul, spirit to exit - time exit from now- natural response of soul & spirit to exit. Like when people dying-body dying-signal for soul/spirit to exit. Why in torture, visions of heaven, paradise, where we go. Many heavens, many worlds. Different metaphors a path present represent different heavens. God, Buddha, (somehow are one), choice you make in a lifetime. Spirit go to different heaven, spirits have journey like soul have journey. This way travel through web of all spirit. Go to one heaven, influence where go next. All life does same dance different times. Blade of grass to frog to man to sun to moon to man to woman. It is this dance and knowing the factor = numerical equation= it is a physics thing. finding what that journey is and concentrate on how journeys interlock find this, find god (I dreamt about that last night! Little hooks that connect into different layers.) In extreme states - it is a body thing. The body is soul is genetics is code is time code is interlocking. Hypothesis: interlocking patterns is formulaic expression of god consciousness

Again

Depression

Not giving what body wants. What want don't take because rules hold you to rules of what society say yes no your soul may be different that what society says yes.

February 5, 2000

Hi everybody, FEELS GOOD TO BE AT OUR ELECTRIC MEETING PLACE. M.'s mad for us taking time out to talk together. I am not. I am just pms. I am really angry at how quick things are evolving a person hardly has a moment to think about things and enjoy the little changes. There is too much on my plate. I want to do one thing and one thing only.

Which, M, (T) would be a way of cutting all of us off from you, which M., would be counter productive to the whole point

She's scared.

Of what.

Why she is here.

Which is what?

To be happy in the eternal now, in light, in play, in compassion, and the big responsibility.

Thanks, that is a good enough clue. Wow.

We all have written a lot in the past months. I feel sick. What has been going on in therapy. Who has been responsible? I don't know, it feels like a pussing wound.

Names offered? No names, no one want to claim the stories. Can't we just tell and remain anonymous

Hey, that is a really great idea. Who would want to own up?

I sure don't want to fess up

M. observes there are a lot more voices chattering.

Yup more of us are shaking loose. A much bigger part. It feels like walking and having after images after after image, a mirage, waves of all of us. Yeah sort of.

What about that? Good enough for me. How about you.

Mad not time at piano, sorry phillip. I just don't know how to get it all in. you were before. I guess you are right. Piano first thing this morning? Yeah. Before stephen and the student we can come back to this o.k.? alright.

Its is hard, I agree with M., there are an awful lot of demands. Is there anyway?

MONEY

If we had lots of money we wouldn't have to waste 4 hrs. a day doing non what we want to do type of work.

Good idea, so that means we need to define our perfect day, and see how things achieved in our perfect day

I like

You interrupted, it know

I like the idea of looking at our whole eternity and trying to figure out what that is like and then look at the eternity in the moment rethinking the notion of time, and space and energy, little lessons, markers, why we are all here, and who we are all are. Are we more than one soul? Not really.

See, you felt much better M. when we played piano, even for just 15 minutes.

I notice. That my upper body is finally free, in a way it has never been free, which is a tremendous miracle. I've been dancing for 12 years and that place has been dark and un-illuminated and a source of evasion. I think, when the body becomes totally free, this will be signification of a release of all of the untold stories in my body, and the little parts all out, and ready to begin the acknowledgement process. Who knows. And then comes the issue of proper alignment. And the twisted parts, untwisting, and finding balance in their being.

This morning, there was a tussle of how to do the eggs, someone wanted sunny side up, someone wanted flipped, someone wanted scrambled. So they started out sunny side up, and then got cut up sort of scrambled, and then the Sunnyside up cut up version of scrambled got cooked. Someone wanted butter with no jam on the toast, and someone wanted jam with no butter so we had a slice of each. I think this is cooperation. What else.

Memories

Wow!!

Great job y'all

Yeah!!

Now can we go dance?

Yeah,
I think so.

Thanks for taking the time Misa

Not a problem

I am in this for the long haul.

I love all of you
I love myself

Sorry big angry man, can I give you a hug?
Me want M. hug!
Print me out!
Alright
Show me
My name?

Mr. Hissssss

Oh my F-g G-d
I haven't been this out of it in ages. Barely functioning in moments.
Feel better now switch me Dylan, me new notebook
Me happy M.
She listen me.
No like that bad yucky drawing teacher. He stupid. M. smart.
She let me go to look at painting class like lady.
Lady look like witch
But still like lady
She safe witch
She be good
See have witchy bitchy personality but be good to students.
Maybe why M. so yucky out of it.

No able focus she.
Wow
Hope she work o.k. tomorrow.
We tired.
We not sure what up
Feel like fuse broken inside
We sorry M.
We fix fuse in dream
No
More bodies come out to tell story
Me glad paint,
Me glad also go to gym to play in studio
We sorry your body hurt.

We o.k. with life.
Wow
I tired M.
Go to be?
Tuck me in?
Read book?

Be nice M.
We love M.
I so happy in art school
So happy in art school
Me want make art

I think something is shifting I am scared. It was hard to do simple things today. I had a hard time understanding simple sentences. I had a hard time focusing, reading, I would stop mid phrase of something and forget. Back to the phase of not remembering something I did moments earlier. Very frustrating.

Something big up?
Also losing control of eating well
Feeling very very stressed out.
Feeling lost in space or something
Didn't make it to ballet today
Oh well.

January 23, 2000

Seems like since forever. Been staying mostly integrated. Dylan went to his first drawing class. He was really angry with the teacher. Said he didn't like him, and decided not to take the class. Teacher he say, he divide class.

Talent no talent. Me remember what Mr. Ted say about No talent. Me hand shot up. Me ask teacher why he divide class between talent no talent, and how can he really know. Teacher say good question. That is subjective opinion. Went on to talk about talent and no talent. Those with out talent still get good grade from working hard. Dumb philosophy. Then teacher say grade on how neat art book is. My hand shoot up. Why grade on neatness teacher, if art, learning, taking risks, being wrong result not so neat art different part of brain use. Very very very angry with teacher. He stupid, no understand. Maybe not stupid, not aware. Me write letter to the president of the school. Bad to do that to students. Very very very bad!!!

Hard me write.

Me start letter.

M. fix.

WE like drawing painting class at night teacher! She very good. M. going to look at our money. Class a lot of money.

Phillip really like the music teacher. It felt somehow like a home to me. The egos aren't as huge as they are in dealing with the visual arts, or dance. They seem more sane somehow musicians.

Was very very very happy

Happy day yesterday..

Start with morning tablas..piano

January 6, 2000

I hate myself for printing this shit out and giving it to that therapist C. Really angry about all of this. It feels so weird, so strange, I have no idea who I am any more. I think I am shit. I binge ate today. And yesterday. 1/2 chocolate bar, 1/2 bin of caramel popcorn w/peanuts. It pisses me off that the alters make "healthier" choices, and have more control in some ways. I drove myself hard today and got a lot of stuff done on my to do list. I worked on insurance hunting, Orff-schulwerk research, hunted up negatives to get my press kit together, drew, played tablas. Dylan came out for drawing. Such a distinct difference. He is really comfortable with himself. Someone else was new (Vicki offered) out at dinner, who salivates, and tastes things really well, stares, doesn't talk much, thinks she is "mute", and enjoyed eating off the plate like a cat, enjoying the cat licking a lump of lemon mayonnaise from the edge of the wooden plate. Tiffany marched right into work today and took over, very very very assertive, I just didn't do much else but let her take over. I am getting pushed out, I feel like I don't know who I am, I am angry. I keep pushing away the denial. When I do, things go smoother, life is easier. I fear people thinking I am weird. I don't fear discovery. Shit this Tiffany character.

They are all great. I am just really grouchy. She was kind of grouchy and full of complaints, didn't like at all doing the insurance thing. She is easy to co-share with, very easy, I realize that I don't like dresses either, very few in the lot.

January 9, 2000

Hi, this is Tiffany here,

I would like to say, that I notice, that it is much easier to be myself in the context of speaking with CH, I do not feel at all safe with S. and therefore, I share consciousness with M. I do not like the way that he checks out and goes to be with other women in his mind while he is in my presence. It makes me very angry. That is why I let the angry one out, Mikey, is that you? NO ME NOT Mikey me (no name offered – M.)

NO NAME OFFER RIGHT..ME DYLAN PART AND BERNIE PART AND ERIC PART AND CHRIS PART AND NO NAME 3 PART. ANGRY BUNCH GANG TOGETHER.

So last night, I simply let them out and they wanted to kill something. The cat was there, they associate killing with anger, and they realized they did not have anything to kill because they all love the cat

(my anus has those sharp pains again-M.). So they went to bed and punched the bed and kicked their heels and threw a temper tantrum. I feel it useless to speak with this matter of exiting to consider other women because it is a part of his nature, so what makes me feel best is to exit myself, and scan the room, and look at Wally, who M. has always felt fondness toward, and Tim, and if she were single, she would certainly date these men, most certainly. She is very very sorry that she did not perform for Tim, and I wonder if it might not be too late to audition for Dance Kaleidoscope, even though she will not be in L.A. in the summertime? No. I think not. Anyways that is that. I am very angry with S. for exiting because I don't like this game, but it makes me feel as if I have power. When someone else has power over me by exiting to be with someone else I return to the role of victim, and I would much rather play a little game than put myself in that position. Nothing, absolutely nothing seems to work with S. I get so so so angry. And after the anger. Why, there seems to come a bit of an understanding about Mrs. P., perhaps even before the anger. You know, she, well, she. We are beginning to appreciate her pain. My god, can you imagine, six kids, an alcoholic husband, away from family that was shit to her, from her stories, and he beating the shit out of her, blood all over her face, and beating the kids, and not having anywhere to go. My God, that must be awful. I don't know myself when the cult started, I think I was created at a much later date. Someone knows, or, when was I created. Gosh, I am confused. Quite difficult to know one. M. is pressing in and insists she is me. But I know this isn't true. She pushed ME OUT first and I want to push her out NOW. I wonder if I was the initial baby, no, yes. Perhaps I was.

We watched breakfast at Tiffany's on video, and I better understand my origins, at least as far (M.-get lost-this is MY TIME)

I can't get lost, it just happens, I float to the surface and express my appreciation for these parts.

Stop that fucking goody goody attitude. If you really cared you'd fucking figure it out and let us have our say more than one hour a week. Do you think I like bleeding all over our friends? Fuck that. You are a self-righteous self centered bitch, and I hate you M. You pushed me out and assumed the throne, and never had to look at any of this, and you built wall after wall after wall after wall so you would never have to listen to these screams, and I became a note taker so to speak, and really tried to keep order. I don't know why I ever listened to Gabriel. Fuck you. I WILL TOO GIVE THIS TO C.!!!

There, I feel better, you spoke your truth once upon a time and spoke of your hatred for US, and now I am speaking of my hatred for YOU. It is a two way street you know, and only once have you let me wear my dress and feel like a girl since Christmas. You SUCK!!!! You really suck, and you acknowledge it feels great to be us.

Hey no bash m. so hard, she doing pretty good
SHUT UP YOU WHINERS!!!!

I think Tiffany needs

I DON'T NEED YOU< ANY OF YOU!!!!

I AM TIRED OF ALL OF THIS> (sharp pain in knee) soul exiting.

Tiffany, come back, we need you.

She is gone.

You fucked up m.

You really fucked up m.

I know

Sigh

I know.

I guess I have been feeling kind of balloonish lately, and I guess I have been saying, forget it, I am boss, and no therapy twice a week. I am scared.

Whatcha scared of meessssa? Scardey cat?

Taunting voice who are you? (no name offered must be me)

We are all you scardey cat???

Scarde scarded scardey cat???

Yup I am I am terrified.

We can't get you, you can only get yourself!!!! You can come down under and join us anytime you know. Anytime you know.

Who are you? We could really fix you up for life you know, you'd never have to feel any more pain. Who are you? Arghhhh! I know this is good for me, I always feel better afterwards, we all feel better. I am remembering the movie we watched yesterday, and seeing how trauma can create schizophrenia, the living poetry, nightmare, expression of the trauma in a poetic, live, metaphorical, mythological way, that is in that place we enter in

extreme pain, separate from the body, outside the normal parameters of experience, in paranormal situations we access, tap into other parts that humans haven't measured or understood a great deal and it is the place I think shamans speak of. That unseen place that the aborigines maybe call dreamtime - and here the parts live. So I was grateful for how I created myself to survive. I wondered there must be parts of myself that are really close to this. Do I have parts with the power to lock me up in a schizophrenic prison. I think yes. I think my brother and sister, these parts took over. I think they have other parts, who aren't as strong maybe. They don't have the love and support to get to the other side. I don't understand that. My other sister did. Maybe it was because her primary host personality was always fighting, and pissed off, and the fighter. Well, that just wouldn't let it happen, so when her world started to cave in, she chose to not go insane, and then begin to process. I hear from the grapevine that she is getting her life together, finally, but is still in abusive relationships. I understand so much now. I am sorry Tiffany, I realize I have been a do gooder. I was always the do gooder, but got blame in the family. I think, now that I am 40, I am beginning to realize that what I feel when you take action is embarrassment and shame, and I want to hide the truth, it is a burning uncomfortable sensation that makes it hard to breath, and if it becomes overwhelming, it becomes that exacerbated shit fuck voice that verbally abuses me and tells me I suck, and am stupid, and fat, and ugly and that voice really became active just before all of you begin to surface. Mirrors, almost, mirroring our own hatred thanks for expressing that.

Such a complicated puzzle. Tiffany, how can I make you feel welcome?

Listen.

o.k., I am listening

therapy 2x a week

slow down when you need to

keep your trap shut more about what went on - you sound crazy when you do that - and the public in general is ignorant about our phenomenon - and we need support

NOT REJECTION>>>>try to let us be out in a normal way

deal with this partner stuff

that is enough for now!!

Somehow, I feel like we are asking for the same thing.

I've always felt I have had a twin. Funny sensation, it is expressed in a desire to buy two of everything lately, If one wears out, I'll have another. I felt like the twin was murdered and someone else was sent to school, that the twin was kept in the closet, tied up, put/stuffed in a basket, trunk, cage, put in the loft upstairs to hide, or in the basement with the refrigerator full of body parts, that this part died and someone else went to school. I feel better. I breathe easier.

Yesterday I had a hard time being present and I was pretty dissociated. Which is different that switching - switching..the parts are present, and engaged. Dissociated the system kind of goes into a catatonic sort of state, or really frazzled, disconnected. Hard to function, drive..write checks, shop, get places, do anything but do nothing and vegetate until the stuff comes up - or I agree to what the inner voices are saying when I am driving the body. Like last night. They did not want to go to the gym at 9:00 at night to watch the dance - someone just offered the bad stuff that happened at night out in that area years ago. I am writing a lot. I think I need to work on the budget for Tiffany and see where we are at.

July 27, 2016

Goodness gracious! In the flow of the moment I pause to GIVE THANKS! Our system, for the most part, is an integrated flow. There are still aspects integrating and age progressing, and I as M., barging in on Dylan's book project (it is okay M., we are the same person you know), remember the tender moments of integration and how more and more all of me is alive in all aspects of day to day living. I think my parts, above all else, did not want to be forgotten for their contributions to the process. How I (we) EVER managed to achieve what we have achieved is nothing short of a miracle. I think, if anything, this process is initially a peacemaking process, making peace with one's divided self. Once that happens, then harmony and reconstruction and fully realizing all of ones potential can be had at. What is so curious to me is the age progressing part of this journey. A new "baby" aspect surfaced, and the first part of integration was picking out a creamy silk scarf, that also served as a baby blanket to soothe this part of who I am. Then this scarf went to work. There was time spent coloring in coloring books. The other day, at the beach, I felt myself letting go of control and allowed this baby aspect to be at the beach. The way I moved in space took on an awkward quality to it and I was experiencing the ocean in a fresh way. I observed my parts wanting to teach "baby" how to do pas de chats in the water so there was time doing that. Then "baby" wanted to dive and there we have it, her first dive. It is so curious to me, what vital aspect of my soul was locked up in the time period of being a baby. How this part also needs time for integration. All those other names, they never come up, and I am grateful for the journal entries, scribbles, scratches and scrawls as a record of the journey. I don't think I am "whole" yet as I have been telling people I am. But I sure have come a LONG way! I can sense parts that may still be stuck in sadness, or anger, that I haven't brought to conscious awareness, but I am aware there is more of me to discover.



DEAR DANCER LADY



My legs ARE
Hollow MY STORIES
ARE YOCKY!

CHAPTER THREE: That First Class Back

Earlier on in life, during High School, M. (the initial front part of our system) enjoyed art classes A LOT! It was very difficult to live in the shadow of our sister Shelly. She was seen as so gifted it was said she could be the next Pablo Picasso. I at that time, was mostly suppressed, and didn't engage in art classes, but M. did. I engaged by doing the rascally things, like putting lemon extract in the teacher's Constant Comment tea. Her style was very tight and constrained and representational and tied to reality. She took a few classes at the community college after she graduated from High School. There was one teacher who taught at this school who also taught at the community college. At this time, M. was not conscious of trauma in relation to this instructor. He did an excellent job of shutting down expression in the arts by telling M. she had absolutely no talent as an artist, but that she might make it as a designer. One of her watercolors was stolen when it was left out for pick up with other student works, which put a damper on her interest in art classes, and she wound up dropping out of school when she got the boot from her parents' house at the age of 19 and found it too difficult to work full time as a waitress at a Bob's Big Boy AND go to school.

She came back to the visual arts by chance. While in a dance program in college, two of the requirements were anatomy classes. The first one was all book learning, and she received an A+ in the class. The second required dissection and cutting open a cadaver. The first time she walked into the class, and was shown the cadaver, she nearly fainted and was so distraught that she went directly to the administration of the dance program and asked what her options were. She wasn't conscious then of having seen what our system was led to believe were dead bodies and it triggered her without her knowing what a trigger was. They told her she could substitute a life drawing class. M. went back to the community college and signed up with the same teacher who had told her such a dreadful thing 8 years later – returning to a perpetrator so to speak.

She showed up to the class on accident a full week early. She sat on the edge of the modeling stand in the cool dim room being still and listening. Some quiet voice spoke to M.'s heart. *If you have the courage to take this class, your life will never be the same.* I think, in a way, it was me as Dylan speaking through my higher self, that it was time to process, and we would do part of the processing with art as a conduit.

The first class M. was surprised at how her drawing seemed to have improved even though she hadn't been engaged with any visual art, and she thought that perhaps that as she grew in her understanding of dance, this transposed into a greater understanding of the figure in space. At this time her repressed trauma was beginning to surface. She had put God and Jesus on the shelf, seeing that religion wasn't working, had divorced her biological family,

was seeking for answers with regards to why she was suddenly blurting out mean things to herself, why she was using so much sugar, caffeine, and nicotine to cope and had even added alcohol. She was also on a truth quest and constantly thought, truth in my spirit, truth in my soul, truth in my mind, truth in my body. She was aware that she remembered very little of her childhood, and when her higher self suggested she look to her childhood for answers to all of her questions, and she didn't remember much, she said – okay, I'll go there.

I suppose at this time I need to talk a little bit about her body (my body too of course in that I am she – I am just sharing this from my perspective – it is possible to hold multiple perspectives about something given a person's life experience) and the power of dance to unravel the mysteries of locked tension. As synchronicity would have it, last night, I had a nice chat with a woman who has provided bodywork for over 10,000 clients. She offered her observation that when people relax, and tension releases, the stories in the flesh releases, and how people, when being worked on, would begin to tell stories, often of things they had repressed. There was a lot in relation to women and sexual abuse.

When M. first began dancing her body was SO, SO, SO tight. When she bent over, her hands went to mid-shin, her pelvis was tight, her neck and shoulders, her back, her hips, everything super tight and inflexible. In addition, she was highly dyslexic not knowing what dyslexia was (if a teacher raised their right hand she would raise her left), as well as very dissociated (not knowing what dissociation was). In the course of a conversation, she was lucky to hear 2 or 3 sentences of what other people were saying, and would piece meaning together from these random bits. In order to process what she was reading in text books she had to hand write what she was reading more than once. She developed a very tidy little system of learning. She'd would read a chapter and write it out, then re-read it and capture key concepts, then re-read it again and make symbols to connect concepts. She would also read books not assigned in that she was more interested in mastering the topic and was really hungry for knowledge. For finals she would fill up all the chalkboards in an empty classroom at late night study sessions collating all the formulas and synopsis of information in preparation.

With regard to her physical body, at one point she went to see a physical therapist for a hip issue, and he told her that her body made absolutely no sense with regard to its alignment. With dance, it is about bringing the body into alignment, and relaxing, and releasing, and opening up to increase one's range of motion, facility to build technique. Additionally, it is about bringing awareness to parts of the body one can't seem to access, or make connections with. It is like trying to see inside oneself. Sometimes it would appear dark, and with work, awareness would come, and light, and understanding of how the body ought be moving. She was at a point in her development where she was focusing on her hips with her hips, neck, and shoulders holding the most

tension. She just couldn't "see" into them. She was also beginning to have strange pains in her anus. M. was prone to always seeking ways in which to become a "better" person and often looked to self-help books for answers. She went to her favorite local bookstore to look for information. She was drawn to one book in the self-help section, and the page opened up to a page that explained that often times, before a memory is relived, there might be pain that comes before the memory. She rapidly closed it shut placing it back on the shelf not wanting to read any more.

At the end of her first class back some part of the system took control of the body. Her looking for answers, and acknowledging that the pain might be due to something she wasn't remembering, was a signal to the system that she was ready. This part drew in a totally different style than the host, or front part, M., and drew something that spoke to M. about where to start in her journey of discovery in relation to what was surfacing. She said, okay, I see that, I get it, but didn't cognitively make the connection.

The next day in class she thought in her mind, Dad, get out of my hips, these are mine, not yours. The result was a flood of energy through her pelvis and she began to move so differently that the teacher called out remarking about it. She yelled out to the whole class "well you'd be tight up you a-s if you father had f'd you." She then sat primly and quietly in a small classroom chair and watched, numb, still and unmoving, her thighs pressed firmly together, her hands on her lap, for the rest of the class. Numbing used to be a big deal. Not feeling anything. You pinch hard and you still can't feel anything. At the end of class, the woman who had been her choreographer in the first dance she performed in came up to her to give her a hug, and she had her first flashback in class. This is when the journey began. She was so freaked out because she thought it was impossible, having come from a good Christian family to have such things happen. The dumb counselor at school wouldn't see her because they did not know how to help and did not tell her about resources. What idiots! She was even more perplexed and confused when the whole inner family tumbled out that spoke with different vocal intonations, had different names and complex inner communication systems with some systems unaware and not in contact with other parts.

I'll never forget her first visit to see the system's first therapist. She sat there so primly in a conservative dress. It was dark blue with a swash of mauve and purple flowering and came up tight around her neck. She was trying to present as someone very healthy, and normal, and put out the persona of goodie two shoes so to speak. Oh my word! She had NO idea! In many ways, it was easy for the parts, because we had already lived through hell. For her, she was integrating this information for the first time. Also, for the parts, they didn't experience the totality of the experience, they might have only captured a bit of something. For the host, she had to see and experience EVERYTHING and contain it ALL! As I write, she says internally co-conscious with me "oh I get it now. It took a lot of courage to own it all

and integrate it all and accept it all.” Now back to the drawing (I’m kind of jealous of this part of me actually.)

This is what we observed with regard to HOW DRAWING WAS IMPORTANT TO OUR HEALING JOURNEY (I am aware one shouldn’t use all caps – but sometimes I feel they are necessary – and because I am who I am – I give myself permission to do so.)

We observed that sometimes drawings would be made that were a form of “telling” that was safe. We were tortured and tormented in horrible ways and threatened that if we did “tell” then we would either be killed, or experience more of the same. Drawing was a form of “telling”, abstractly, which somehow was safe for the system. Once it was out in this form, then we observed the flashback would occur, the abreaction, and the reliving of the trauma. It was somewhat the same with movement. The gesture or movement would tell, then the recovery of the trauma would come after. I find that utterly fascinating.

I don’t think this was “art therapy” per se. I think it was using the power of my natural gifts, which are so close to the best part about being human, being sourced from positive energy, power, and creativity; to allow for THAT be the catalyst to get things to shift. Could this approach transpose into something else for someone else with a different life work is my curious thought. Say for instance, someone passionate about the outdoors – could they use that passion as a means to release the energies that seek to be released.

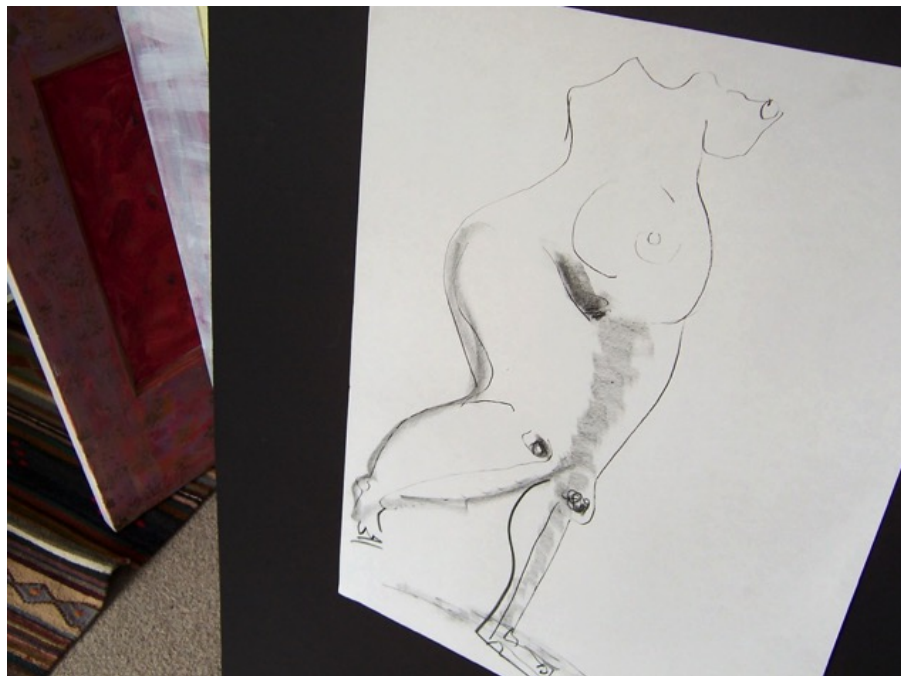
I think drawing the undraped human figure was also very important in that the human body is right there in front of you, and one finds yourself in the naked, vulnerable human form before you. Now comes the fun part. Sharing some of my one-of-a-kind awesome art. The host part doesn’t like to take ownership of the work, and I feel her embarrassment, and cringing, that I call the art what it is – in my view great. M. titles it as something that flows through her and points out to me that all parents thing their kids (art as kids) are great, when they might really just be flawed schmucks, but I have the courage to take ownership. It was our system’s life, our system’s stories, and our system’s gift. We were given a great big extra scoop of creativity and we are grateful for it. I think it was this creativity that helped our inner community map out our survival plan – which we never let on to anyone! It was a combination of many, many, many things, and some of it that goes beyond human comprehension even in that is so abstract. It involved an awareness of other dimensions/places/spaces that co-exist within the one most humans are aware of, and being able to draw strength and comfort and help and guidance from other sources that we perceived as real. An outsider may say, well you created that. But what is reality other than something we create anyways!

On with the drawings some that I admit are what I would label as “not very strong” work as works of art, but they were strong with regard to what Native American Indians might call “medicine.” Drawing has been, and

continues to be very, very, very strong medicine! We remember the spirits of the Chumash ancestors being there to be of support to us in that some of the abuse happened on lands they used to inhabit, and this displeased those spirits. I know that sounds crazy! But it is a reality we created to help us. Or perhaps a reality that reached out to us to support us. When a body is being psychotortured its response to pain goes beyond the Wong-Baker Faces pain scale of 0-10 a concept our system recently submitted to a journal called *Survivorship*, which will soon be published. The body in extreme states goes beyond a 10 and you find yourself begging to be allowed to die. The next stage up is beginning to splinter and subdivide the experience to manage the horrific now. The next stage up one begins to hallucinate and have visions. The next stage up you feel your body shutting down and it shuts down. Then the de-escalation begins and one works their way back to being the main front part going about their daily activity with neighbors, some family members, friend's completely unaware of your secret life and distorted house of mirrors. These early works give voice to all survivors of extreme abuse and the extreme states they experience. Enjoy isn't exactly the right word for image viewing. Be open to receive be eager to take right action and thanks for sharing my story.



Many of the early drawings were missing mouths, which spoke of perpetrators silencing their victims through psycho-torture and other means of threat and intimidation. This gesture drawing captures the horror and sense of voicelessness quite well.



Another common theme were figures without limbs, or heads, representing how the sense of self became just the body that was not in our control, but the control of others, and violated by both men and women.



This image preceded the flashbacks where the body relived being shocked with electricity. The first time the body jolted was

spontaneously in a therapy session with someone who was supposed to know a lot about the type of trauma I endured. I would often have jolts of electricity in the recovery process, like small epileptic jerks, which may have been partially organic. In our system, parts report that after certain trainings, the system was jolted with electricity to forget the experience. Other parts report it was used as a form of torture.



This image was associated with bringing to conscious awareness the terror of do not tell programming. Being held over the water and the water being chummed for sharks and told, if you tell, we'll feed you to the sharks. When I began to heal, I was terrified of the ocean. It was also a big trigger for me when people would begin to talk about sharks, or wear T-shirts with sharks on them. The other day a client came into my place of work and did his best to try and induce fear in me with regard to sharks when I commented on the day being good beach weather. I repeatedly told him I will not let the news stories stop me from enjoying myself nor will I let haunts from the past intimidate me. Now THAT is progress! Although – it is true I no longer swim out to the buoys. That would be a good goal – to take that power back by swimming out to the buoys.



This is a gesture drawing that came out in about a 3 minute flurry – it is called *Grandma*. There was a sense of trauma occurring with a grandmotherly figure in my life, and I dismissed it, until one of my siblings, when were exchanging notes after 20 years of no correspondence between us, she reported “Grandma” as a trigger.

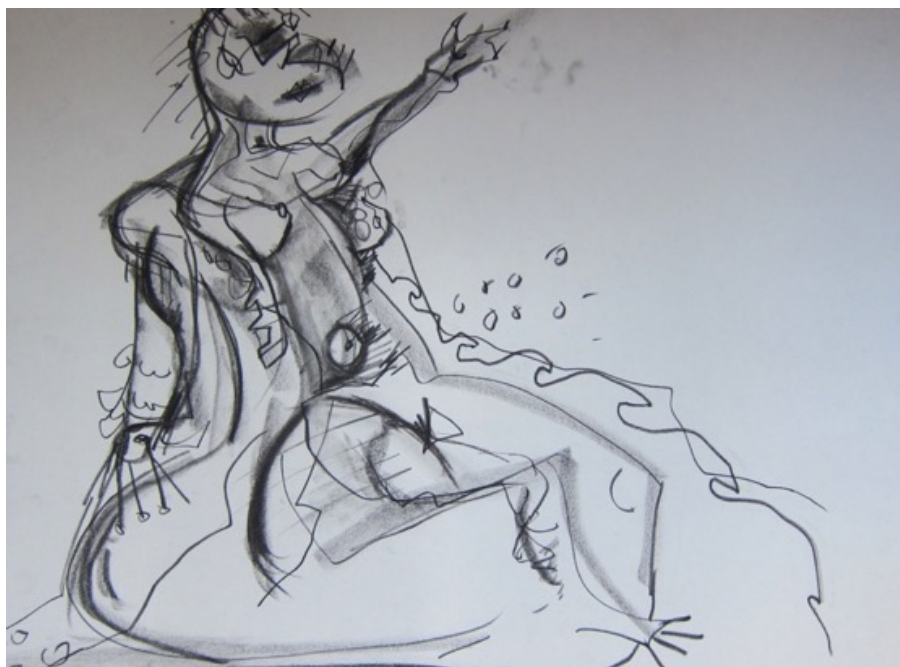








An expression of the upset from a very bad owie in feminine parts.



Reaching out asking for help seemed to be a theme that came up in the work as did themes of Christ figures and angel figures.

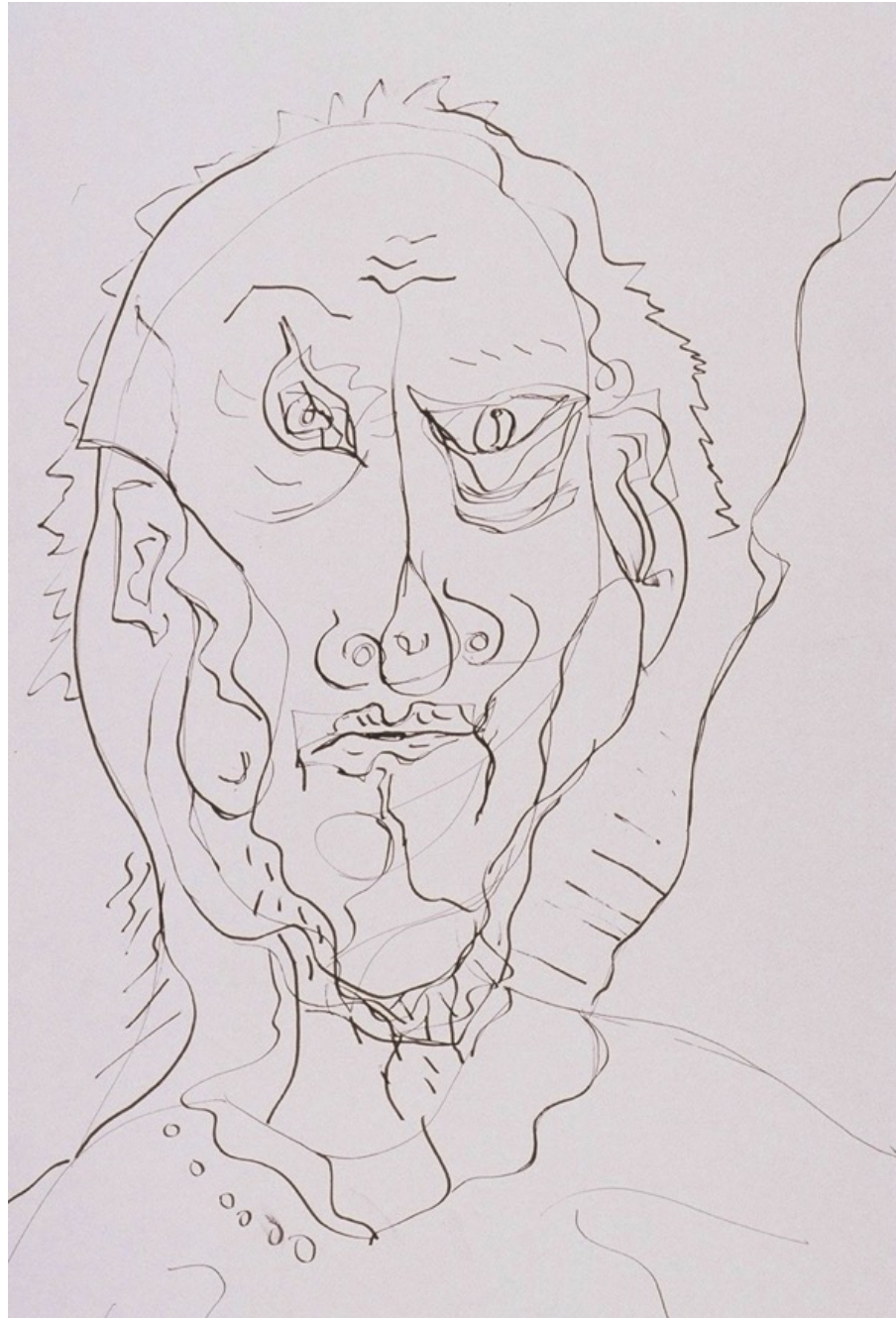


This image depicts the feeling of dissociation.

This image reveals a repeated theme of being in bondage. Although themes seemed to repeat, no two drawings were ever the same and I think that holds true for all of my work. It tends to be “one of a kind.” Also, different aspects definitely have different styles of drawing.

I would also like to say it is almost as if the drawings make themselves too. Sometimes my state of consciousness shifts when I draw, which I think has to do with the *medicine* component of drawing. When one opens up to be one’s largest, interconnected self, the individual experience becomes a part of the universal experience, which is a very large container. When the individual experience blends into this, it helps the energy shift and become unlocked and move out of the body. My different parts also, would often make animal noises or grunt when drawing, or different parts might hold the implement differently, or in different hands, or in both hands, or use the feet even.







The Ernie/Bernie colors first surfacing in the expression.







Angelic Guardian Angels often showed up in the early work.



Awareness of just one side – just one part





There were the drawings that flowed out that the main front part had difficulty with in that they seemed so “evil.” Just last night in a life drawing class a painting in a similar style emerged, although devoid of torment, indicating to me that this part of me still has expression to convey.

Again, there are many images I could share, but I choose to keep the pace of this book moving along at a pace intended to hold your interest. The next opportunity to express as the visual artist in the family was with an installation a part of my system's master's thesis, and after that through a life sculpture class. I have no record of the sculptural work and choose not to share imagery from the thesis – mostly because I don't want to invest in transposing the images from negatives to digital. The installation was, in our view, a success in that the school's photographer invited people from other departments to come and see the work in that he thought it was one of the strongest shows he'd seen in the two years he'd been the institutions photographer and he thought I should switch to the visual arts program.

In the sculpture class the instructor decided to take off early from the class to travel to Europe, and left us with instructions on how to cast our pieces. You can imagine how that turned out! Try and cast a life-sized sculpture in plaster, cut it open and carve out the clay on your own. It shut down my sculpting aspect for nearly two decades. I was so disappointed to lose the work – but in hindsight – where would I have kept such a large work? The most important thing about the sculpture class was coming away from the experience with a very powerful awareness, or light bulb of understanding, that flicked on relevant for the creative's path. I was reading about the spiritual sensibility of the Kogi Indians in South America. They discussed how, in their experience, there is a spiritual counterpart to everything here on a spiritual dimension. As M. worked (I think actually more of her essence was connected to this sculpture) she observed that there was a way of connecting with the negative space of what was emerging, and to carve away until what sought to be revealed emerged. She knew when the truth of what sought to be revealed emerged when a particular clarity came to her vision. She observed that it was a sort of click, or connection, or resonance that reminded her of the adage "truth rings like a bell." Rather than ringing, it was a visual connection that rang true like a bell – as if vision had auditory resonance. At that point she welcomed the observation that expression already pre-existed somewhere that wanted to flow through the system, and our community's task was, to the best of our ability, let go and let it flow through us. Art, in short, pre-existed on a spiritual plane and our job was to let it flow through us into this dimension. Two decades later, my first time back at sculpture produced this. Which I painted brightly to represent our systems many different facets/ colors/textures.

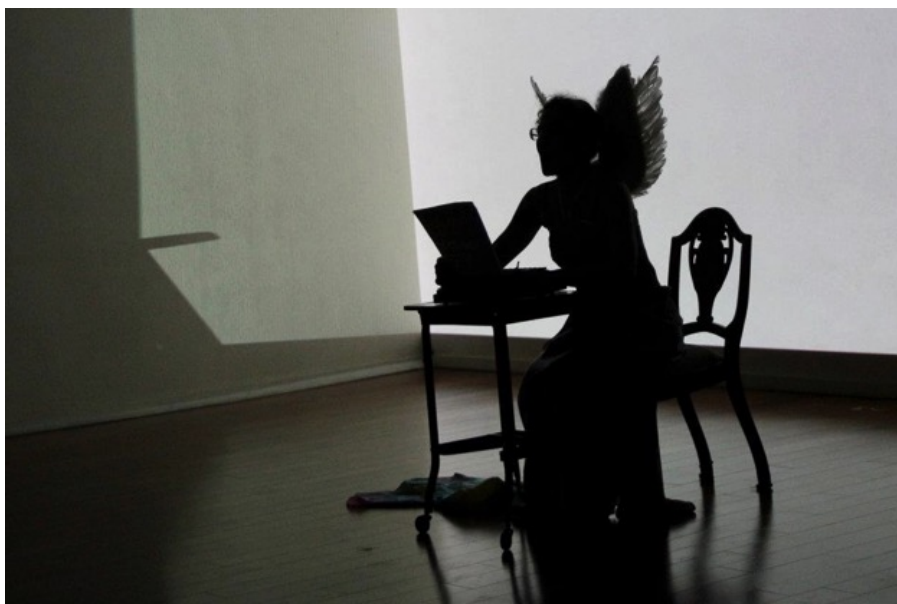


Me in the portrait sculpting lab so GLAD to be making art in this medium.



Natasha the Pirate Queen – my nephew fell in love with this work so I passed her on. I hope she doesn't end up in a garage sale!

Chapter Four: Creative Writing and Theater



MD in performance of “G-d’s Secretary” photo by Kathee Miller

The system began to write poetry while in undergraduate school in composition and creative writing classes. One of her A+ classes was an introduction to poetry. One of her favorite college memories was of sitting at a coffee shop, with a fellow student also in the class, and the two would practice derivatives (she also got an A+ in calculus – I am proud of this part of myself to have academic success – to spite her then disabilities) as well as study for the poetry class. Along with the journaling, bits and bobs of poems and stretches of creative writing became a part of the process. Dance is much about learning how to “let go”, which, now that I look back, I realize this moment may have very well been pivotal. Learning from one of her favorite dance teachers how to “let go.” There was one fleeting moment of feeling this utter release in a contemporary dance class. If one let’s go, then what one is constricting tight and stuffing under, well, that eventually surfaces in that, in my experience, the body naturally wants to heal. It wants to come in alignment with nature, which is a thing of great beauty and wonder. If you say yes to the process, everything you need to help you mend will surface at the right time and right place. The following two bits of creative writing archive M.’s discovery of relaxing and letting go in dance classes. Art, set the healing flow in motion. Art, saved out life (along with all the healers along the way that came to us of course.)

Floor Barre

I remember absolutely nothing-I have experienced-relaxation. i walk away-silly jello-i mean silly putty. I have difficulty speaking because of the state of my tongue. The appendage hangs from its hinge. A screw has popped free and is lost in my gullet. Another has come so loose that the nut grips precariously to the last bit of threading. The appendage hangs from its hinge, dangling by a thread, liable to slide unattached at any moment. How disgusting...really... to feel like a dog who lies in the sun, tongue hanging from side of mouth, saliva dripping.

(Floor barre is a type of dance training that occurs all on the floor and uses visualization and relaxation techniques.)

Fountain

A figure stands at a precipice
clutching a package that groans.
A cataleptic shape stares out into space
while an internal organ bemoans.
From quivery palms flows liquid apprehension
that permeates a package succumbing to pressure applied by
white fingers, like talons, afraid to..

“Let go...”

comes a whisper like a whimsical breeze

“Let go...”

once again stripping fear with a tease

“Let go and...”

oh no!

A package catapults from the edge,
a wonder is birthed in the heart,
contents are sailing in blue;

smile

joy bubbles forth with a start.

This was inspired by a singularly joyous moment of understanding the concept of letting go and feeling my body completely release in one of my favorite contemporary dance classes. I realize this story is unraveling a bit

like what it felt like for our system to unravel and tell their stories, and process the suppressed memories. It was very chaotic, was not linear, direct, or straightforward. I flow with this in the moment and am curious if I will let this continue, or will go back and reshape it. If the goal is to give the reader a sense of what it is like to unravel all the mystery, then letting it have a bit of chaos in the flow makes most sense.

Once our system was finally free of the formal education process, which was a great container for the system to have the resources to express, the real adventure for me, as D., began. The graduate school journey is M.'s story to tell and I leave that to her to tell or not. Once free from Academia I was free to begin my own exploration, which wasn't in the curriculum of the MFA program, although, there were places our aspects inserted themselves. Well, I guess I am going to speak a bit about this. I don't LIKE to speak about this because the second year was very uncomfortable for M. She set as her intention for her thesis "I Intend to Heal" and took a multi-disciplinary approach to her work seeking out collaboration with artists outside of her department. She made a film called a film maker that abstractly gave voice to her journey, worked with actresses in the theater program to bring life to poetry and bits of creative writing that also gave voice to the journey, engaged with a musician and made space for the musician in the system "Phillip", and even included an art installation as a part of her installation that took three solid days to put together – which I have already mentioned.

For one of the poem's, My Cat Thomas, M. knew that she would not always be as fragmented as she was at that time. At this point in time, the way our different selves presented was very pronounced in terms of body language, gesture, and vocal intonations. We met a terrific actress, who was featured in the film, and she was so kind, and open and understanding, as was the film maker, with regard to our fragmentation. M.'s thought (my thought in that I am M., I continue to remind myself that) was to have the actress tell the poem in such a way that she would tell it as she switched from part to part. This required different aspects being present with the actress so she could attempt to digest the different nuances of each aspect of my self. The focus was never on names of the different selves, but how they presented physiologically. A very powerful work of art came out of this, which became a part of her thesis project, as did the film.

Here is the poem.

My Cat Thomas?

My cat Thomas? He lost his nine lives much too soon. His orange stripes slipped between the warm asphalt smelling of fresh rain.

the tide turned
the clock struck one
the pumpkin turned into minced meat spiced with leftover bits of ash

i cried

two times they told me to do it and do it hard and I sucked as if it were my favorite green lollipop.

strung out needle nine injections flipped me overboard and m wet curls starched with blood dried up in the heat of passion.

number nine was my special number. I called it up. No one was home. So I hung it up again and this time the phone rang so hard that the curl of the cord became poker straight and swatted me so hard that my eye lashes braided my brows.

Nonsense? I dunno. Maybe. My cat Thomas? He lost his nine lives much too soon. His orange stripes slipped beneath the warm asphalt smelling of fresh rain. My tongue caught on a bit of gravel and bled. It began to talk all on its own without my moving it. My mother took a shovel and curled it over the iron.

Forever hush whisper
be silent.
forever
silent
be silent
still silent some odd years later
all is calm all is bright
round young
I wept
like Jesus?
probably just as hard
he rocked me in his arms once or twice and let me know
he knew

My cat Thomas?

He lost his nine lives much too soon. His orange stripes slipped beneath the warm asphalt smelling of fresh rain.

I screamed in the car. The seat belt kept me safe. The speeding highway was calling my name. Open me said door. Jump. The asphalt, in my memory, I

knew. I shook my head. No. Screaming. No.

My cat Thomas much too soon.

Stupid people frightened of a small child with answers to too many unsolved riddles.

Stupid fucking idiot people
They killed my cat
To silence the act

They cut out my tongue by piercing my heart with sorrow

My kitty my kitty my kitty my kitty

I want my kitty back give me my kitty back
My kitty my kitty my kitty I want my kitty back give me my kitty back
My kitty my kitty I want my kitty back give me my kitty back
My kitty kitty I want my kitty back
kitty back
kitty back
kitty back

kitty

kitty

kit...

here take him

kiss the crushed skull

My Cat Thomas? He lost his nine lives much too soon.
His orange stripes slipped beneath the warm asphalt smelling of fresh rain.

Following is a link to the performance. It has had over 11,000 views. Cool!
<<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gfmJyHOevus>>

And in the moment – my floater aspect comments – they undoubtedly used trickery. So much of what they did was smoke and mirrors, lies, so much based on lies, manipulation. It felt so real at the time. They fabricated a warped reality and in a drugged state it was impossible to tell what was really happening – except, a few things, I know for certain weren't trickery, but were

actuality – which a sister sibling has corroborated, and a brother sibling has corroborated. The things that have been corroborated – I know, they must have been actualities. The actuality is not important in the process. Being BELIEVED that your reality was your reality was ESSENTIAL in the process. I never could have gotten through it all without those therapists that said three magical words. I believe you.

Another bit of writing that became integrated into the healing journey, which was actually before M. began to recover memory, was one in relation to her mother. Her first choreographic work in undergraduate school was so well received that she was invited to create another work for the main stage and she set out to create a duet. Her spouse worked with her poetry and created a marvelous score. M. The two expressions did not work as a cohesive whole together and M. was deeply horrid by a scathing review in a local paper where someone she perceived as a friend coached her sister about what to write. Years later, this person, after attending a workshop by a famous choreographer in San Francisco apologized to M. She said that this famous individual discussed many of the same things that M. discussed in relation to the nature and structure of her work and that she did not understand her viewpoint at that point in time. I'll never get why people put so much weight in famous people's words and why it takes the blessing of their perspective in order for people to approve of something someone not famous says or does. Ludicrous! Anyways, the dance worked as a dance, the music as a piece of music, but together they didn't jive at all. Here is that poem, and following the poem is a link to the astounding piece of music created by M.'s then and now partner.

Voices

Thousands of voices going off in my head, like light bulbs, but you can not hear them they are felt not heard.

Unless of course you acquire a megaphone or something like that. One with plastic bulbs on the outside like . . . lamp . . . fishing anyone? Days gone by – momma gonna be mad at me now. I forgot to wipe that smirk off my face. Eat soap Jenny, eat soap, eat more soap you bitch, take that – whack. You don't want to cry for me eh? Poor momma, she could not control herself to this day she thinks it was me not Jen that kicked a hole in the tub.

I only wanted you to love me, didn't want me in your womb, well I must have wanted you.

Cut me out paper dolls, cut me out of the air I am breathing, let me forget the past, please, momma please. Please she sung sweetly, swinging on a swing

made out of air and cotton candy threads, sweat beaded, with lots of space in-between.

Build me a pillow of protection: paddle whap wong. Ouch- she meant to do it and do it hard you bitch. I hate you and that is why I feel like a witch (at times) because that is truth. My hatred of you hating your own flesh your own blood, your own hopes and dreams that you yourself chose to tidy bowl, yes, swoosh with the tampons and other disgusting things down the sewer with the rats out to sea.

Sit on a boat?

Maybe, with two mice shootin' crap with die made out of sugar cubes, and then we'll sit and have that cup of tea, brewed in that special pot

Peacefully.

There is no record of the dance that this poem inspired, other than a poor photograph or two, but following is a link to the beautiful piece of music that came out of this, which remains.

[<https://soundcloud.com/dylanmkelly/palomino-songs>](https://soundcloud.com/dylanmkelly/palomino-songs)

Art became a form of telling, and at a time when the nature of trauma, and tools to help, were just surfacing. My body seemed to find its path back to wholeness in tandem with therapy. Therapy for the most part became a container for the flashbacks. Initially there was little discussion between the system and the therapist. As soon as we walked in the room, boom, different parts tumbled out, re-remembering, abreactions, flashbacks. After therapy, the host, or main front part M., did her best to shove all parts down under until the next session. She wasn't very successful with this tactic. I found this little bit in my poetry file, which shares my thoughts about the power of telling in art and in therapy during my early days of recovery.

Telling

telling
what does telling do?
much like the steam out of a pressure cooker
i warned him
it is going to blow up
the beans
he ignored me
sure enough the valve broke
bean soup
e v e r y w h e r e
i don't want my bean soup everywhere
i don't want to die
i don't want to live in a psyche ward
i want to heal
i've important things to do even if I don't know what
they are yet
i want to heal and a part of healing means dancing
in spite of the obstacles
i don't think teachers are aware of how high those hurdles are
to some of us
so telling all my teachers is a way of letting the steam out
of the pressure cooker
creating dances lets out steam
painting lets out steam
therapy lets out steam
and after the steam is out what is left?
a simple bowl of bean soup, a warm chunk of bread, a cool glass of water

###

CHAPTER FIVE: Her Dances

As with the journals, the drawings, and the poems, the dances became an abstract form of telling. Dance is interesting in that it seemingly has a shamanic potential and the medicine is quite strong. By shamanic potential, in dance, I mean, the ability for a work of art to go BEYOND the self and connect with the universal, the highest self, and textures of the collective unconsciousness, and perhaps impact the physical being epi-genetically, which I have no scientific study to back, just a hunch, and the power of observation.

In the process of making and crafting the dance, M. sought to “tell the truth” with what wanted to surface – even if it went against what an assignment was, she remained true to the vision. Her process is hers to tell – but in that dance is a part of the art-making journey. I’d like to include it in my storytelling part of this journey and let this aspect of our integrated system tell about the dance making process on her Facebook blog and in the book she is writing with her arts collective.

In later years, during the integration process, other parts learned how to dance as well, including myself. I am a TOTAL GOOFBALL in space and love playing. When it comes to performance, although we are all present, I am not sure exactly what goes on, although I have distinct memory of M. being quite surprised in mid-performance to discover parts normally not out during a show surfacing to test drive the thrill of it all. There was one dance, a few years ago, where it was really challenging because one part would learn the dance, then M. would take the conscious lead, and she would have to re-learn it all over again.

Being a part of an art collective is an awesome way to work on integration skills. Artists are generally open-minded and open hearted and do a good job of accepting you the way you are. If my voice changed, or my mannerisms changed, nobody missed a beat. The only time my vocal quality was questioned was in a ceramics class. I as Dylan am open and up front, and if someone asks about it, I tell them, our system survived extreme trauma by sub-dividing the psyche, and this part of me, that makes art, talks like this.

In her MFA program the first assignment given was that of a solo. There were things coming up for her, and some of it had to do with death, and the perception of sacrifice, and life taken before it had a chance to begin. This became integrated into solo, abstractly. When our system performs our consciousness opens up to receive information from the audience. There have been many times where performance is in an altered state of consciousness. Our system is familiar with these states because we were in an altered state often times as a child. Sometimes induced by drugs, and sometimes induced by pain inflicted by perpetrators. The body remembers how to open these channels. In performance, in an altered state, one connects easily to the larger

self, and in the larger self is not only one's own story, but also the stories of everyone who has had analogous experiences. Given one experience, it may induce a certain degree of grief, or sense of loss. Someone else may not have had YOUR experience, but another experience that results in the same texture of grief, or loss.

M. performed this solo twice. Once for a famous choreographer, Bebe Miller, visiting the school. She told her it was very rare that she was riveted, and that she was mesmerized by M.'s performance from beginning to end. She gave some advice to edit the work down. After it was edited it down she performed it as a part of her MFA I concert, and also presented the *My Cat Thomas* piece. One young dancer came up to M. after the performance in tears. She said I don't know WHAT your dance was about, but I am receiving release and healing. I have felt so guilty about having an abortion, and haven't been able to forgive myself. Your dance has helped me to release this. It was this dance that caused M. to consider, and know, the shamanic potential of dance. M. not only received healing, but an audience member did as well.

Following is an image from that dance. It is a gesture of M. believing she was putting a knife into something. In going through old notes and things, and integrating new information, they used a lot of trickery. For instance, giving our alters dolls, covering them up with ketchup, and making pretend to hurt the babies as a part of the initiation training. When a child is drugged it is very different to distinguish between what is trickery and what is actually happening. At some point parts believed they saw life murdered. I don't want to offer any comment on this. I will ground into what our companion of 26 years offers. If this had been the case, you'd see it in my eyes. It isn't there. It is easier to embrace this perspective in this moment but also to honor that my system knows otherwise. It is possible to hold more than one view, and in holding many views, I maintain equilibrium.



Following is a link to that dance, *Harvest Moon*.

< https://www.youtube.com/edit?video_id=8JyoIXs6M4g&video_referrer=watch>

I would also like to include a link to her first produced dance, in that there is a record of that, and comment that this occurred pre-awareness. Before she began to process the repressed material. What is intriguing to me is that this dance, *Dreamscape*, spoke of something lurking in the depths of her dreams, wanting to be known. The predominant imagery that was coming up for her was imagery from Sendak's *Where the Wild Things Are*. Yes, she had parts, wild parts, and lots of them, lurking in the underground jungle waiting to be set free, nurtured, loved, mended, and healed. Here is the link to that dance, *Dreamscape*, with music by Michael Mortilla, and a super duper scream by M. The video quality is not the best in that the lighting is low, and video cameras weren't that great back then, but you'll get a feel for this very first form of telling.

< <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=F4Opl-pxsAA&index=1&list=PLlcLo0tA6SzkhOKArm92eXGC-aXnZ4Gv>>

After graduation, and beginning to launch her career as a dance maker her dance making continued to be a way of working through her inner issues in an abstract way. One dance, *My Flame Knows to Swim the Cold Waters*, two years in the making, became a signature expression that honors the heroic efforts of a survivor's journey. At the time of its creation M. simply set out to challenge herself and improve her dynamic range while being open to giving

expression to what sought to flow through her. M. premiered the work in a studio showing format, and once again experienced how performance can prove to be shamanic when an audience member approached her after the event and remarked about how she was experiencing a great release of some sort from the work. She was in tears and her entire body was quaking. Below is a link to that performance. The work went on to be performed by other artists in several cities in California as well as abroad in Slovenia and Istanbul.

< <https://youtu.be/OskXB0OoRdA> >

In that the texture of what survivors of extreme trauma experience is as hellacious as war, whenever wars have surfaced, or acts of terrorisms, this has triggered the dimensions within her, and stirred the vast reservoir of emotional pain, that, to this day, still exist. As a means of working through the pain, and giving voice to not only her own condition, but acts of war, she has worked with the abstract textures of how this impacts the planet through the abstract voice of dance – a form that gives expression to aspects of the human condition that skirt conventional signification, or direct storytelling. Her work, *Lion's Fire*, opened with a section that was a response to the imagery that was released at the time of Abu Ghraib. HERE is a link to an excerpt to this performance. <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tHMhfCo-VRA>>

M.'s work, *Twang*, is full of playful moments, but also includes a section which clearly shows M. in her full dance shaman energy releasing what sought to be released in the moment not only for herself, but for the health of the planet. This link shows this clearly, at around 20 seconds into the excerpt of *Twang*. <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XXcLPF0T0cU>>

More recently, she has been using the meditation “What’s the Solution?” for choreographic impetus, and responded to acts of terrorism in France, where she spent a year abroad in her youth working as a nanny for a French family in Paris. Overcome by the grief she went into the studio with the thought that ending war begins with quenching one’s own war within. She worked with boxing gloves and improvised to the song *Babylon* by Don McLean taking the initial impressions to an artist residency to chunk out a work with her arts collective. The title of the work is *QUENCH* and in the flow of the moment, her present focus is on bringing it to her west coast communities. The dance maker in the family has made over 45 choreographic works, which is a lot for an independent artist given the nature of how the industry works. There presently are not an abundance of resources available to artists, and it takes quite a bit of ingenuity to figure out how to get ones work out into the world, which is the topic of a different book project. As I said before, I’ll leave dance making matters to the dancer in the family, but I felt it was appropriate to include it here in that dancing and dance making played a significant role in our soul’s evolution.



photo of M with dancer Mojca by Sue Bell for a creative project

Chapter Six: Enrolling as Dylan

After M. completed her undergraduate and graduate degrees, and our integration flow began in earnest, my contributions to the world as a visual artist began to develop in that M. would relinquish control of the body and allow different facets of her entire being have at living life. I, as Dylan, decided to enroll in visual art classes at the local community college, actually, it was M.'s choice, but once we go there, I came out and took charge. As I stated previously, in my classes I asked to be called Dylan, and everyone politely respected my wish to be called by this name, and this continues to this day. In art classes, I asked to be called Dylan, and when meeting new people even, I find myself introducing myself as Dylan, or rather, I think M. does that! I had an interesting image of how this aspect of our totality may actually be our core. I saw what happened to the dancer aspect, to the musician aspect, and decided I wouldn't let on about the artist urge within and managed to hide this little light from the perpetrators. I managed to stay safe in creative places, which I think is not a dimension those who are channeling, or are conduits of evil can touch or reach. Evil manifests in the absence of love and awareness of light is my take on how that goes down. Because I hid out in pockets of consciousness of light/awareness/interconnection to nature this couldn't be accessed. While the dancer and the musician in the family were broken, I was not, and kept this aspect of which I was secret from the perpetrators. M. became the front presenting aspect of the totality in every day life, and although we were a part of the same system, she was unaware of the aspects created to house the trauma. In essence, this was a form of false self, or phony self, in that a large barrier called denial existed between her orbit and the totality of what her consciousness was experiencing. If a perpetrator can annihilate a child's primary passion, interest, reason for being on the planet, then they can gain utter control of the victim. My sense, in life, is that my gift has been creativity, and given this, I was able to creatively respond to the situation and NOT ALLOW my being to be utterly annihilated, destroyed. In the moment, as the system seeks greater degrees of harmony and release, how we interface with the world is strongly as M., who connects with most of her own being, and myself as Dylan who connects, to the best of my knowledge with ALL OF WHO I am. As M. learns to give up control, more and more, my energy becomes more alive and vibrant, but she is also alive within whom I am as Dylan. What I think might be going on is I am now becoming the container for all of my many aspects of the self and I am integrating M. into me as the core. M. is most active in the dance field, and of course, at her day job in that is what she has always done. She has been the one to go to school and go to work. It is difficult for me at times, this "growing up", in that it is most fun to be out when it is time to play, or a pocket of time opens up for creative activity, and I find it exhausting when I am out for long stretches of

time, but I am becoming more resilient, and also, for the first time in the physical body's life, am prioritizing with TAKING CARE OF MY PHYSICAL body by letting it rest when it needs to rest and not be stuck on the hamster wheel of escaping from difficult emotions and sensory experiences by running, running, running, and always staying busy. Our system's first thought, in our story is, if we could only grow legs, we would run away. Well, there is no more need to run, we can now rest, relax, and restore.

I would like to now share some of the images from the few classes I took at the community college as Dylan, and also the drawings when I left that container and began to simply devote time to life drawing labs in the community. The work, much to my amusement, has been shown in Vienna and New York as well as locally. I am no longer interested in showing the visual art that flows through me in a formal setting, mostly because I don't like the rules of the art world, it is a "stinky religion" to me. I would be interested however in creating a museum for unknown artists that houses significant bodies of work and stores them, rotating exhibits.

Life Painting

These images are from a life painting class as well as a creative drawing class that proved to be an interesting adventure with the teacher. At one point she was so exasperated with me that she blurted out in front of the whole class, you have absolutely no sense of color. I wouldn't say I had NO sense of color, but that I was locked into being honest with what wanted to flow through me, and what was flowing through me was SO NOT what the teacher wanted to happen. I would perhaps say that the nuances of giving expression to extreme trauma have their own colors, and if one has not experienced extreme trauma, then what is depicted might appear quite foreign. On the backs of some of these paintings, all parts that contributed to the painting signed their names. That doesn't happen much any more. I do have a sense when something is the voice of a specific aspect of who I am. The "Jacob" character was active last. Oh how I wish I had time/resources/energy to play in my art studio EVERY DAY! That is my wish in this moment.



Processed in Instagram – Ax Man.



Processed in Instagram – in the moment, I call this, Horror Stories, My Own



Processed in Instagram – title that comes up in the moment – What Have I Done? Some incidents, no color could capture them, black and white seems most appropriate. The figure painted in red obviously conveys, for Westerners, that we associate red with anger as well as pain, and also romance. My right to choose my entrance into a romantic world and enjoy my sexual nature was robbed from me. Can't say that I think it matters that much, but it was a loss.



Processed in Instagram. There is an entire painting under this one. After completing the painting and getting it to where I wanted it to be, it felt so honest, the teacher said something unkind about the work. I went home, got drunk, and painted over that painting saying "take that, you don't like tube painting, well have more of it!" I didn't handle criticism very well at that time. Is this too much information?



Processed in Instagram. The title that comes up in the moment? "I promised not to tell"

Creative Drawing

Somehow, we managed to work it out, this teacher and I, and she came to respect me, and just let me do my thing. I think this acceptance actually enabled me to have moments where I could actually DO the assignment given, and build a bit of technique. I am very grateful to her for the container in which to develop and explore. Not that I went on to use any of the techniques, but they stretched me, for sure!



Assignment: to draw something in our home environment. In our home there is a love of pianos and a love of cats.



Assignment: learning how to use charcoal as a tool. This is in a private collection in California.



Freestyle – Mixed Media, in a private collection in Austria.



Assignment: Learning to work with gesso and ink.



Purple Bruises and Blue Dreams, oil pastel



More freestyle – ink, salt, tears, and paper.



Getting out the Nasties: Mixed media, gesso, saran wrap, condoms, ink, toothpicks.



Our of Control – I remember the teacher saying TERRIBLE things about this drawing. I LOVE it! It depicts exactly what I wanted to depict. I am glad that I never let bullies in classrooms intimidate me.



Chapter Seven: Out in the Community

As our main front part began to sort out employment to pay off student loans, and began to contribute to the household expenses, my time for exploring the visual arts in an educational setting got the short shrift. While the dancing aspect had oodles of time in school, well, the visual arts as well as music didn't get quite as much time in space. For a number of years we did manage evening life drawing labs, and from this, a really strong body of work surfaced.

I am finally at a point where I am comfortable with people viewing what comes out in life drawing sessions, but for many years, this wasn't the case. I would estimate that there are 250 drawings that I consider strong from this stretch of exploration. All parts of me contributed to the process and I think this is why there is such diversity in style with the images. I wish I could share them all, and perhaps that is another project. A handful of drawings are in private collections with the bulk of images in my care. They feel significant to me, and I am not sure what I am supposed to do with this significance. They aren't the sorts of drawings one would necessarily want to hang in one's home. A formal viewing environment, definitely.

Over the years I have participated in group shows and have shown the work guerilla style as a part of the M.'s *Museum Project*. She created a costume like a museum guard, loaded up a slideshow of images onto an iPad, installed the iPad within a frame, and wore it on her back. She then installed herself at the Louvre in Paris, the Belvedere in Vienna, and the Norton Simon in Los Angeles. So, now I can say my work has been exhibited in these places. It is a fun way of poking fun at the religion of art – a texture I can't find words for that attempts to remind humanity that they themselves are the greatest work of art of all.

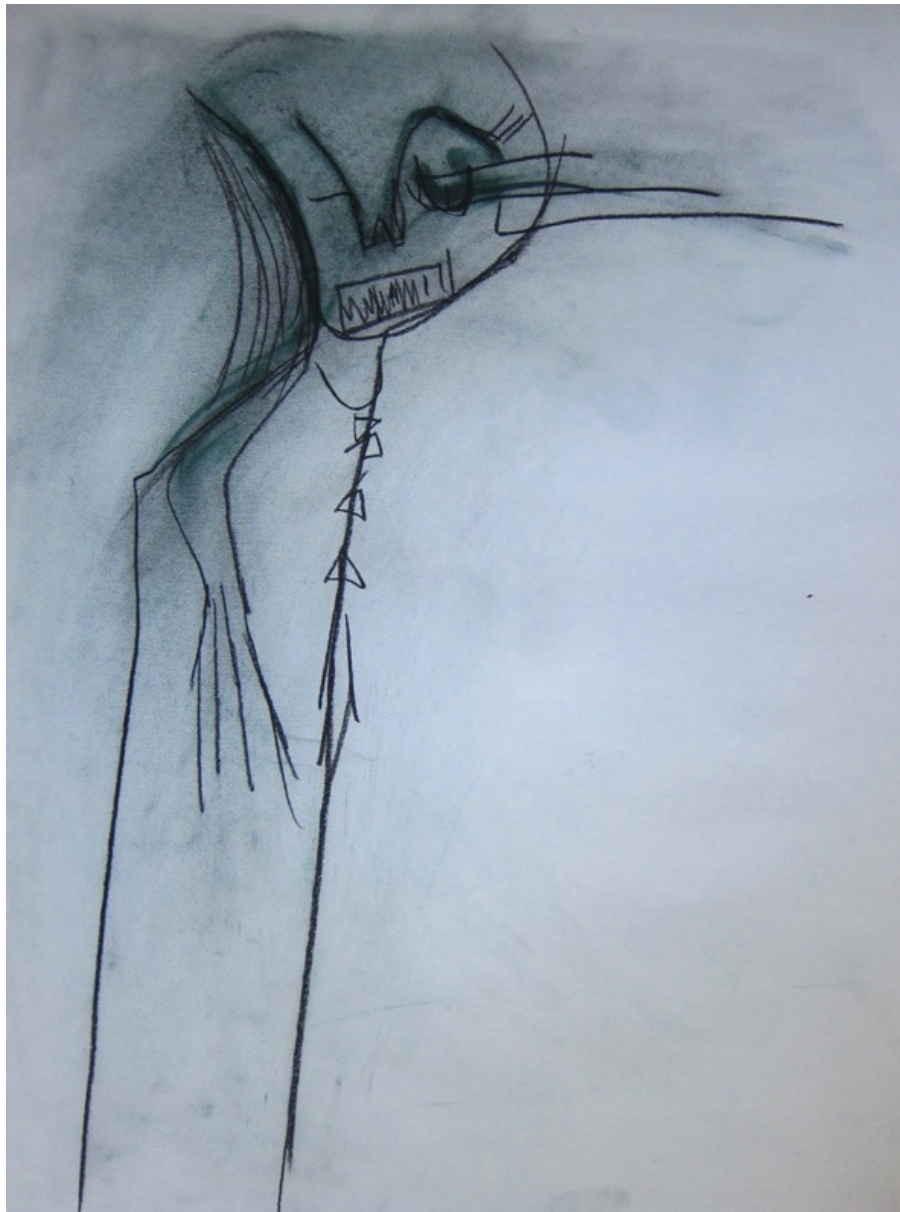
Additionally, I've installed art in random places, like underpasses, which I LOVE to do, or have installed clay pieces in nature, which I also LOVE to do. The biggest fun yet has been having solo exhibitions in Vienna, and New York, and also my home town – solo exhibitions where M. came out of the closet and was open and up front about what the images represent. I thought I was done with exhibiting my work, but as I write this, I think it would be really lovely to have a retrospective.

Thanks for reading my section of this book, and thanks for viewing. I don't think I want to share where I am NOW as an artist, because I don't want ANYTHING to influence this work, and even a reader viewing what I am doing in present time, well, that thought form in and of itself is a texture in creative dimensions and I don't like to be boxed in – I play best with wild and utter abandonment. Once this later bit in life is chunked out, perhaps another book project. All I can say is that it is so much fun exploring new mediums! It helps that M. feels as if she has accomplished all she wants to as a movement

artist and agrees it is time for REST, RELAXATION, and FUN!
I hope you enjoyed my contribution to my family's book project.
Dylan







Ernie

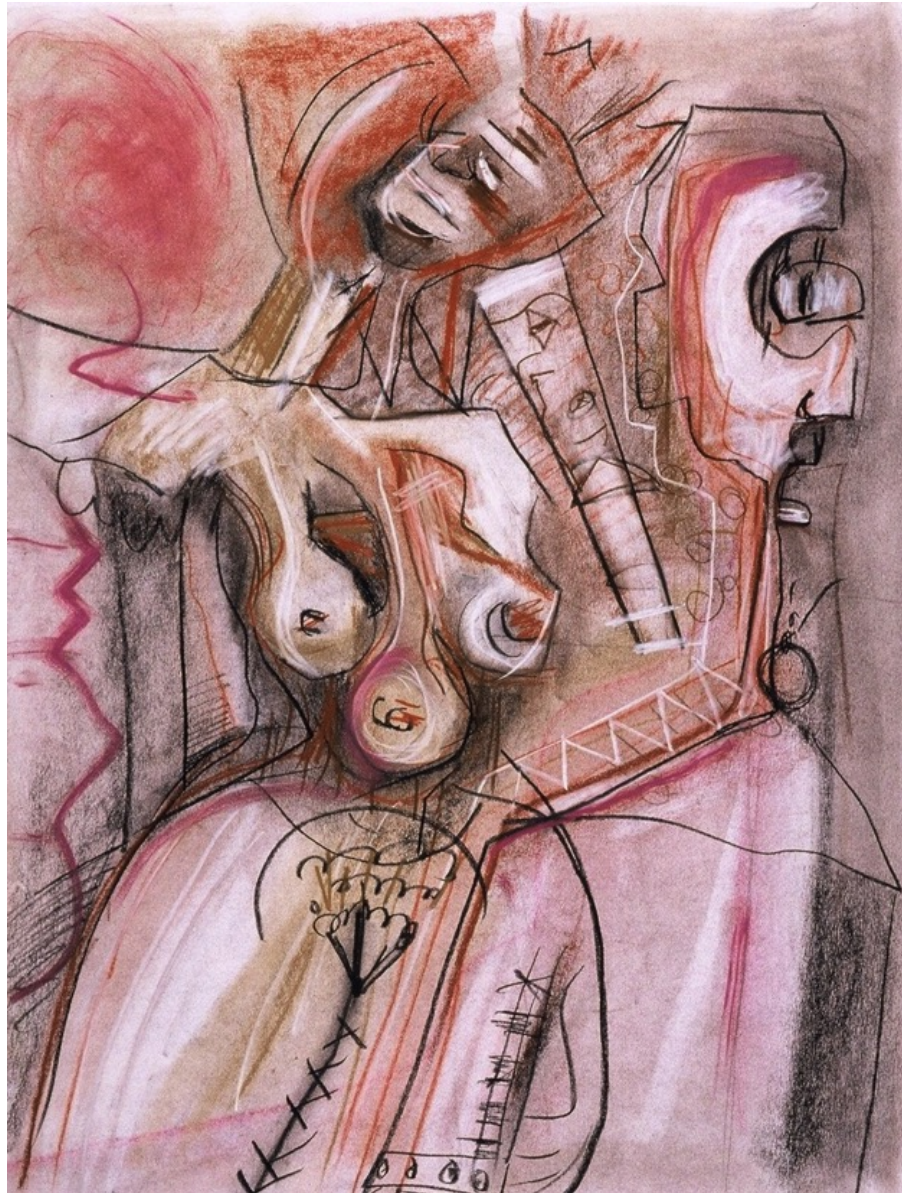


Bernie





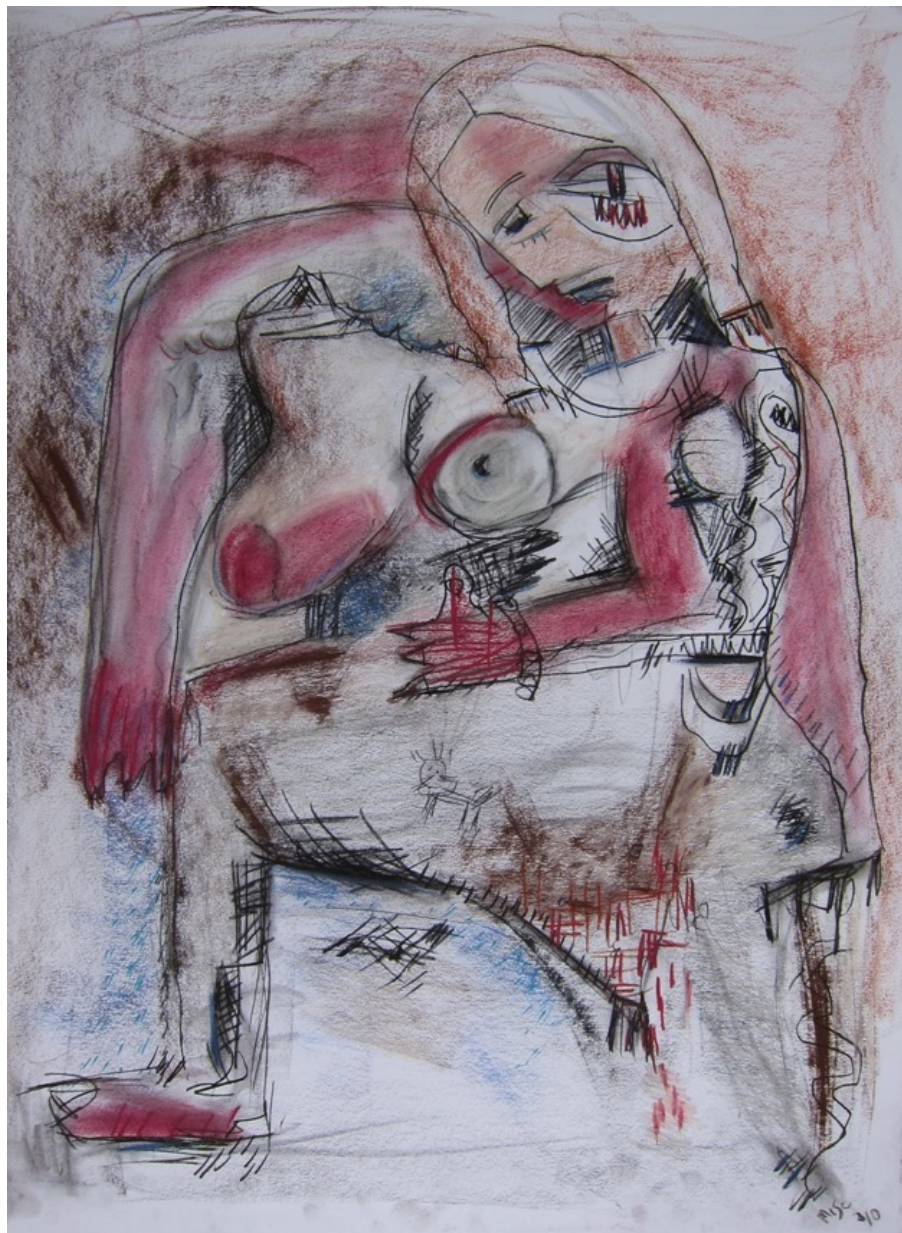
















Exhibition in Brooklyn at the Center for Performance Research.



Exhibition in my home town.



Exhibition in Vienna at ContraMASS Galerie

Chapter Eight: In The Flow of the Moment

In the flow of the moment I get that I too, Dylan, am only a part in the big picture of who I am as an individual, and also, in the context of who I am as an infinite being interconnected to all that is, as well as is yet to be. This is a big share for our system, and of course, difficult emotions surface for processing. I am so grateful in this very moment, that as I wrap up this part of the project that I am connected to such a wonderful support system in way of my therapist, and my psychiatrist, and the container of people and animals that love all of who I am deeply. Next in this series, the portion of my psyche that has spent the most time out and about in the world, the shell, the host, the front part, will take a bit of a break and process what this book brings up, and will focus on her own 20 year reflection of what she has learned as a dance maker. With a bit of distance she hopes to complete the Patchwork Chameleon Chronicles and transition from third person story telling to first person storytelling and be specific about the tools that helped most when processing the final layer of trauma. At least, she hopes it was the final layer, as do I.

This book project has humbled me greatly, and I am not sure why. I hold a sense of awe for my journey, respect even, and it is a lot to own, that I have experienced so much. Thank goodness for the beauty of the mind, the body, and its capacity to heal if one is open to change. It has been an excruciatingly painful journey and I think one lifetime may not be enough to release all that needs to be released. I work at it in little chunks and my present primary focus is to shift gears and welcome even more joy and happiness in my life.

Writing, for me, as the Dylan aspect, is a bit of a chore, and I am curious how other aspects experience it is a joy. So many things I am curious about with regard to how a psyche sub-divides as an appropriate response to trauma and even more curious how even in an integrated state, one feels the strong impressions of these different colors of the self. I once read, that the more fragmented a system is, the less likely it is for a system to reach a fused personality state. In that my system was greatly fragmented I accept that to be me translates, in the moment, to being identity fluid. I organize in a multifaceted wonder way of being so that in any given moment I am whom I need to be to resonate most richly in the flow of the now.

Chapter Nine: The Power of Memoir

Now it is my turn, as M., to share my story through my lens and experience. I fully grasp intellectually that all sub-aspects of me are me, and together we form an I, but in this moment I feel moderate to extreme depersonalization in relation to this fact. Still, to this day, it feels as if the underbelly of what the sum of all my sub-me parts reported belong to someone other than myself as M., simply a part in the big picture of the totality of who I am. I am curious if that will ever resolve, or, if who I am as the main front part that drives the body the bulk of the time, co-conscious will the rest of me, simply lacks the ability to accept the dark side of my history.

There came a time when other mediums of expression were necessary to process what remained in my system to process, integrate, and heal from. At this phase in my growth as an artist the nature of the visual art was beginning to take on a different texture. These new directions exuded health, wellness, whimsy, play, beauty, adventure, and promise. I thought for certain this signified that my healing journey was complete. I was off psychiatric medication, I hadn't been in therapy for years, I was living my dancing dreams. I decided, as an exercise in letting go, to write the memoir I had promised myself I would write. In the writing of it, I discovered that my healing journey was not complete, and Pandora's box burst open. The act of memoir writing itself became a catalyst for change. It signified to parts of myself I had yet to discover that I was ready to face that final layer I always knew was there. In my section of this book I share the first two episodes of my memoir, written in third person, that I self-published under the radar to Kindle Direct Publishing. My offering concludes with me coming out of third person to hide behind the initial of my first name, M., and offer what I learned during the course of processing this final layer. At least – I hope it is the final layer. In addition, I reflect upon ALL of the healing modalities that contributed to my journey and share my personal recipe for thrive. I hope you enjoy my contribution to our system's book project. I thoroughly enjoyed writing it as well as crafting it.

PATCHWORK Chameleon Chronicles

Episode One – QUEST



DEDICATION

Dedicated to the love of my life, my beloved Koutoukie, who has seen me through thick and thin, loves me unconditionally forever and always, and is truly my knight in shining armor. A very special thanks to all of the cats and critters in my life that have brought me much mischief, comfort, and endless amusement. Most of all - thank you Mother Nature for supporting my process and keeping me safe. Great hugs of gratitude - Love you so!



PREFACE

Journal Entry 1.17.1998

If I ever get to the other side of all of this madness, and feel safe enough to tell my story, I would like to begin the tale with a preface for other survivors, and in this moment, this is what I would write.

Once upon a time, someone far down the healing river called back over her shoulder to me hollering, "You can do it, it gets better, hang on and brave the rapids." I heard this call when I attended a convention in Oakland for survivors with similar trauma templates. One of the guest speakers shared her story. She stood before survivors new to the process with many of us in equally mad mental, spiritual, and soulful disarray, a delectable picture of wholeness and balance, radiating health. She assured us that the journey does get easier. As I dared the rapids of the most treacherous parts of my own healing river, the echo of her assurance served as a healing balm, and a lifeline charged with inspiration during my darkest of hours

At this very same convention, I had one of those clarifying *aha* moments blink on bright with regard to my identity. I was deeply saddened that it appeared that many survivors were grounding into their condition of multiplicity, their trauma; their dissociative identity disorder (DID) as their primary sense of self.

I chose, in that moment, a different path not allowing the nature of my condition to define who I am. I vowed to embrace what I felt at that time was my life work - that of an artist most energized by the medium of dance. The intention set at that time was to harness the power of my life work and use this path to get me to safety, to heal, and become whole. Once there - I would reach back and stretch out a helping hand to others imprisoned as adults within the war camp of their own childhood and return the favor of the woman who tossed out that lifeline.

Moreover, once upon a time, there came a place in the process where I swore if I knew what I had to face in order to brave the rapids; surely, I would have chosen death or insanity. But I tell you, in the *now* of 1998, healing sure is good and I do have hope that one day I will one day rest assured that I made the right decision, to survive, to heal.

So, thus far, to hell and back and I have survived to tell about it. With the telling I hope that others in the same state of disarray can draw comfort from my own promise, wherever you are in the journey, it **DOES** get better - I promise, nix the thought of suicide, nix the doors of insanity, choose hope, healing, transformation, and catharsis; and the universe will support you in these endeavors. Be it the buzz of a bee, the soaring of a hawk, the scent of a flower, the roar of the ocean, or the compassion of a listener, **YOU CAN DO THIS! How?**

There are many different healing paths, but what I have found most

useful has been to embrace my passion, my life purpose, what I feel like I came to the planet to do and let **THAT** be my identity rather than that of *victim, multiple, DID, PTSD, Bi-Polar, Schizophrenic*, or some other label. I wasn't born to be abused **nor were you**.

It happened – independent of “karma” – it simply happened steering me off course, steering you off course, the course of what we truly came to this planet to achieve. Adhere to what you came here to do and allow that to be your medium of transformation; and after your catharsis and transformation, don't be surprised if unexpected doors filled with zany lights open up to dazzle you.

Namaste fellow healer, curious sort, and peace to you running rabid in the hamster wheel of that vicious cycle of madness perpetuating pain labeled *perpetrator*. May you yourself find your way back home. I know now, that all souls are born bright and beautiful, and the purity of your core can never be marred - I send you an extra special charge of love and light direct from the bosom of the place I myself feel most safe - rocked in the arms of an infinitely divine and compassionate Mother Nature.



Chapter One: A Slow Train Ride Home

15 years Later

Well, I re-read my '98 journal entry, and was surprised that it pretty much holds true for today, and truth be told, I tweaked it just a bit to give it a bit more refinement. I would add a few things since I have learned much since 1998. I would add, that as I park my rump back in therapy for support while I undertake this project, I note that the field has grown remarkably since the 1990s, and the process of managing flashbacks are not nearly as arduous. I also observe that processing trauma seems to occur in layers. There may be a long stretch of time where you seem to be living your dream with all of it behind you. As one gains ego strength and confidence, you may find yourself processing even deeper layers.

To spite the years that have passed, I am not there yet - completely whole - and I may never be. To be brutally honest, at times I ask myself if I made the right decision to choose the healing path, how dreadful is that? I realize now that the telling of this tale is more about my own healing journey than being an inspiration to others - it is a crude act of survival - selfish even. I write because I must and I write to survive.

I felt that way about dance once, and because of the dance, things shift. I finger the edges of this shift and embrace the fact that the impetus is to write rather than dance. In fact, if I had just 24 hours left to live, I would get this out into the world no matter WHAT shape it is in - and for me, the perfectionist, this seems a bit peculiar. So that is my goal, 24 hours to tidy up the first episode in this chronicle and shape it in the way a choreographer would shape a dance, not the way a writer would write, or an editor would edit. Once a dancer always a dancer and once a choreographer, well, that craft ought to transpose quite nicely now shouldn't it?

MarrMarr

MarrMarr prompts me, a dare really, as many have along the way. Do it, write it, your story - you owe it to yourself and you owe it to others; which isn't, come to find out from the research I am doing about writing novels based on memoirs, a good enough reason to write.

In the moment that MarrMarr prompts me something about the time and space seems right and I open up a note on my iPad returning to a writing project launched fifteen years prior thinking to start over again, from scratch. I am at MarrMarr's kitchen table taking a break from playing with his monstrous 1/26th Bengal cat called Kitty. My inner five year old has been out racing about the house, long bootlaces untied, strung loose, and flying frayed. There is a stuffed mouse tied to one of the two laces. Kitty skitters and skates on the slick flooring using the momentum to bound round impossibly tight corners. Sated and winded after our frenzied play, I settle at the kitchen table,

Japanafied and made elegant by Allie; MarrMarr's spunky, dry witted, creative and infinitely compassionate companion.

My beloved and I have taken the train up from our hometown you see. It is winter holiday time and we are luxuriating in a real holiday, not a working holiday, touring with our dance company to other cities in California, the East Coast, or Europe. In addition to romping with Kitty, I have been losing sorely at scrabble relishing the odd mix of aggravation and glee I am feeling, perhaps a throwback charge from the oodles of times I lost at Monopoly and Checkers against my rambunctious older brothers. My beloved and I have been gorging on Allie's sumptuous gourmet everything, relaxing for the first time in years, which is something I avoid as much as possible; the sort of relaxation that brings on stillness - for stillness, given my history, is a danger zone staked out bright red and yellow – caution: no slowing allowed with zooming in excess encouraged.

I only have a few vacation hours left in the year from my bread and butter gig and use the precious time for a quick getaway to a town that has named itself the happiest place in the United States. The town's acronym, *SLO*, prompts one to unwind and unwind we do. MarrMarr and Allie take us to an event produced by the progressive mental health care community they work for to take in the local color. I fall in love with the funky and outrageously talented *Poetry Church* community and fantasize about abandoning my hometown to seep into the cracks of a slower way of life.

We are away from the region I have called home for over 40 years. I live with my beloved and our own piebald panther of a cat Misty in a small artsy fartsy town by the seaside with a Mediterranean climate and pockets of bohemian feel. The jewel of a city tucks right up against the Southern California foothills and home to the rich and famous, and not so famous, such as me. I work as a receptionist by day, serve as a model for life drawing classes on occasion, and am engaged in all things creative all other hours of my waking life.

There is a vibrant Latin community that manages the tasks the rich and famous do not care to do, a large student community with a junior college and university, and subsets of other interlocking communities making the area culturally and socio-economically diverse. The stunning beauty of the town and perhaps the allure of the rich and famous itself, draw tourists to our community. On chance occasions, I love welcoming the tourists to our environs filling them in on the city's secret spots only locals know about. I had set aside my writing project in order to focus on seizing the gold ring of my *Merry Go Round of a Life* fashioning the reward by reshuffling the deck chance dealt me in life, and dealing myself a new hand, which unfolded in a very unexpected fashion.

So I do it, I take the dare, and I begin to write, yet again, reading collections of paragraphs to my friends as they unfold. I can tell by the glisten in their eyes and their happy faces that this is something that I need to

continue with, and independent of what the outcome of the process is, I commit to the journey.

The chapter of the choreographer is closing with a new chapter in my life penning itself; this chapter begins with story, and the story begins with question, the question being

Why?

A Very Particular Why

I have always queried why in life, a mantra of sorts, and have memory of relentlessly pestering my mother about endless topics, all of which ended in the question *why*? With five competing siblings, the answers that often came back were a tired and mildly peeved "I don't know" with her royally pissed outbursts reserved for frequent other occasions - hence I became a seeker of answers, and later, truth. My mother ironically planted the itch to quest for truth at a very young age with an exotic tale about some grandiose spiritual experience she had on a staircase in her youth. I do not recall the details of exactly what occurred when she asked the good Lord for an understanding of truth, but it was enough to nudge a seed against a warm and sheltered part my soul that would later sprout and grow to be my blooming yet ravaged saving grace. Unusual for a small child I think in the *now*, to hunger for spiritual things, but that story is for later, not now, in the *now* I draw the focus back to a very particular why I asked in my late twenties. Why two of my siblings went completely bonkers and why I myself seemed to be slipping with the usual sorts of things that kept me happy no longer working. Devoutly religious in an ultra right wing charismatic sort of way, I was perturbed beyond belief to discover that the more I prayed, the more I fasted, the more I consulted my bible, the more I went to church, the more confused, off balance, and weird my life seemed to become.



Anne's Grandfather – his first career as a Hawaiian musician

My brother Mitch slipped over the edge never to come back to normalcy in his late twenties. He was on his own quest to uncover our family history and at first sought out the Mormons. Then Mitch travelled from California to Hawaii to research the purported tale that our bloodline trickles back to King Kalani'ōpu'u-a-Kaiamamao, an undoubtedly fiery character responsible for the death of explorer Captain James Cook and uncle to the great King Kamehameha. We knew that my grandfather's first career was as a musician. We were all quite proud that rumor told he was the first to bring Hawaiian music to the mainland. My good cousin Gigi has passed along some remarkable sepia toned jpg photos of him with his ukulele looking devastatingly adorable. He met my grandmother in Kansas and the story goes that she eloped at the age of 16 to be with my grandfather. She learned the hula in order to serve as a backup dancer for his traveling dance and music

show and together they set out to tour the orient. A jealous woman, when they settled in Hawaii she made him give up his music, and he settled into the simple life of being a custodian for a Catholic High School on Oahu, where my father was born. Another photo cousin Gigi passed on to me depicts my father, endlessly adorable like his own father, savage looking, an arm around a young chum, clad in nothing save a loin cloth, bare butt and all.

My brother ventured to the islands and returned to the mainland not only completely bonkers, but with a story he would repeat, quite often, that I resembled the likeness of a photo he unearthed of one of the princesses in the familial line up - a bit mannish and brut in stature - ugly even. The story romps on with imagery of an uncle chasing him around with a massive butcher knife threatening to kill him, and to make matters even more challenging, he was slipped drugs he could not handle at a party. The story also goes that these incidents led to his sad unraveling. My suspicion is that he was spirited away to witness something a wee bit more close to home and that is what sent him over an edge with no rescue option at his disposal.

My parents had a call from Mitch after his return to the mainland. It was a frantic and frenetic call from a friend of his claiming that my brother, like magic, from the passenger seat of his beat up truck, yanked the keys out of the ignition while he was driving across a bridge. Mitch leapt off that very same bridge fearing his friend to be Satan. There was a search for him, which turned up one of his shoes in the river, but no Mitch, or the other shoe. My parents, when contacted, learned of the ordeal, and my father travelled up to Oregon to find him. How he did remains a mystery. I will never ever forget the image of my brother swaddled in a straight jacket and carted off by the MET team. They came out to assess the situation when he was in the throes of a violent and dangerous psychotic break at the family home in a city I care not to mention. A danger to himself, a danger to others, he was carted away. Today my brother is a ward of the state. No one in the family would or could take on his care so Uncle Sam became his father and he acquired a nation of taxpaying cousins.

I randomly saw him just the other day on the street, which I do every few years; he never wants to say more than a few words, which I have always found quite curious. He looked clean, thin, close shaven, and as if his meds had chemically created a semblance of balance. He had sadly lost four of his front teeth - a sight that pierced my heart. I inwardly cringed, the space where my heart is perpetually rent in two wept. He asked me to say hello to *Mr. Jerk*, who was my first and last husband (I have a beloved now rather than a husband), and I told him I had a new partner of over twenty years. My heart reached out to him. I could feel the pain between us - the stories. Sensing he did not want to go there, I let him slip away into the activity in the area, the hustle and bustle of holiday shopping. Just a few feet away from the cross street of Fethcher and State – just like that, he melted into the heart of the city.

Chelle Ma Belle

The story recounted by my parents about my sister Shelly is that while attending Otis Art Institute in Los Angeles she lived for a bit at the YWCA. She chatted and flirted with a Peruvian man, a dishwasher in the kitchen, who responded with rape. Finding herself pregnant, she neatly dealt with the matter by having an abortion - an act that troubled her greatly. She subsequently married the man begetting four children. In her early twenties, she developed schizophrenia and made several suicide attempts including one in which we thought for sure she was a goner. Pills, a massive dose of Tylenol, perhaps trying to put a permanent end to the pain tormenting her innermost being. Perhaps thinking targeting the brain, the mind, would annihilate the memories.

In the end, I could not cope with the volatile and unpredictable nature of her condition. There was one encounter with her where I experienced a terrifying full force blast of her full diaphragmatic screeching with her threatening to call the cops- perhaps rightfully so. My mother and I had ventured down for a visit, thinking, we might rescue the children. We found her at home with the kids in the apartment, her husband away at the time at school studying tax accounting. Her kids were hungry and when I looked in the fridge, I found nothing but diet cola inside. My mother suggested to my sister that we bring them up to the family home for a little respite. The kids clung to us, begging us to take them to Grandma's house. That was when my sister Shelly went berserk, and mother and I high tailed it out of there, our rescuer tails hanging limply between our abashed legs. It was clear that mental illness had claimed the one who had been my very best friend. Shelly I called her as a child. She who slept on the bottom bunk and me on the top bunk - how she loved to push at the bottom of my bed to jounce me about until one day it crashed down upon her. I would declare my undying love for her by singing excerpts from the Beatles song Michelle.

Michelle, ma belle

Sont des mots qui vont très très bien ensemble

Très bien ensemble

I love you, I love you, I love you

From time to time over the years I would search her out entering her name into internet search engines, Google being my favorite, using assorted internet search terms I'd call out, *Michelle, ma belle*, where are you? I always drew a blank, which seems about right for someone severely mentally ill: unless of course the "crazy" is criminally insane, has perpetrated some horrible crime that the press can sensationalize, twist and distort feeding the populace voracious appetite for sex, violence, blood, and gore. Then they come right up - I know, because I pick at my own shadow scabs. I get an urge sometimes to seek out expressions of the shadow of humanity off kilter in color sensationalized by the news - the gorier and more macabre the better - like an itch under a scab I desperately need to get at now and then. To spite

my searches over the years I was not able to track down her husband or her children.

Many years later, my sister's daughter sent a message to my eldest brother, who had grown renowned for his work as a photographer, through a social networking site. We had a happy reconnection and spent a Christmas holiday together. My eldest brother and I were thrilled to find that our niece and nephews had grown up shockingly grounded and happy. We learned my sister had divorced her husband, or rather her husband the children's Peruvian grandmother, who also took in her grandchildren, took in her, and her. My niece Dalia attributes this woman's indigenous ways to her own stability. She struggles a bit with depression, but at this phase in life, she moves forward fluidly with grace and great joy. Dalia brought me up to date with my sister's journey. She told me her mother Shelly hated her meds, refused to take them, became uncontrollable, and was given the boot by this same indigenous fireball of a grandmother that did not put up with shenanigans or people that did not take responsibility for their own actions: even if that person was the mother of her precious grand children.

I cannot even imagine what it must have been like for the kids to see her living on the streets just blocks away from where they were living. Normalcy constituted family gatherings on the streets: sharing takeout pizza on the curb with feet stretched out beyond the gutter, their mother nestled close amongst her small flock of children. They loved her immensely, just as much and in exactly the same sort of way that I loved my own off kilter parents.

After five years of homelessness, she wound up in a home for the mentally ill. My niece coordinated a visit and I drove to Pasadena with my beloved to see my sister Shelly for the first time in 18 years. I will never forget the shock of her sauntering up, with a mouthful of half rotted teeth, skin like leather, with a hardened, manipulative look about her. I realized the beloved playmate I had grown up with had disappeared. I madly hoped my beloved Shelly had gone underground in her psyche. I madly hoped she would one day find her way out. I sensed that perhaps somewhere, buried deep inside, my playful and sensitive playmate was still there ready to come out and resume our inseparable way of being in all things playful and deliciously mischievous. She was so proud of the display of cupcakes she purchased, laying them out for me, my beloved, and my niece and nephews to munch on at a picnic table. The table stood under a rusty tin awning designated as a smoking table for the smokers in her community. She herself smoked like a chimney, as I once had (Camel filtered), as do many of the mentally ill.

We took her to the Norton Simon museum, a museum she had worked at as a guard during her student years at the Otis Art Center, the perfect place for her as an aspiring artist. Struck by the length of time she spent in front of one painting, finding herself in the turbulent seascape, describing what she saw, I heard her describe in metaphor painful elements synonymous with my own recollections of a traumatic past. I found the visit deeply unsettling and my

psychiatrist at that time suggested I not have contact with her for sake of my own stability. I made the painful decision to prioritize with my own health and did not schedule subsequent visits. I “friended” her on the same social networking site used by my niece and nephews and noted she never posted status updates. From time to time, I would venture to her page and post something positive. Then, I stopped even that. Before long, I unplugged from the site all together. Truth be told - I am utterly ashamed of my cowardice.

After a few more years of her running away from the home she was in, going off her meds, and decomposing into psychotic breaks, my niece became her ward. She is now in a facility that she cannot leave from of her own free will. My niece, who in a saintly sort of way visited her mother weekly, is at a point now where she feels as if she can’t manage the visits and is beginning to cut back as are the other children all now grown. I do not know all the details by choice – how horrid is that? I worked for a period as an aide in a home for the mentally ill and I found this often to be the case. It was much easier for strangers to connect and cope with the crazies then the family members themselves. I have not given up hope, that one day I will be stable and whole enough to reach out to her and fantasize about chatting with her caregivers about my take on the situation. I am not there yet - and in the interim, I ground into my own healing journey fantasizing that as I heal, she heals as well.

So - shit and fuck that and sad to say, two lives lost which pisses me off to no end. My brother, an incredibly bright and gifted athlete, and my sister, a phenomenally gifted artist; so much so it was thought she might very well develop into being the next Pablo Picasso.

Domino Number One

When I think back to the moment that triggered the shift tilting my own life like a string of toppling dominos towards my own unraveling, and subsequent spiral into and out of hell; it was probably that moment in the warmth of the afternoon sun sitting under some pine trees overlooking a lagoon located on a golf course.

At this phase in my life I had not heard of the term depression, post traumatic stress disorder, or coping mechanisms, or anything other than an ultra right wing born again Christian identity complete with passing out tracts, praying in tongues, casting out demons and laying hands on the sick believing that Jesus could heal my failing marriage. I knew he was due to make an entrance with his second coming any day now - any minute actually - for as long as I could remember. It was during this period that I remember my parents taking my sister to see an expert in demonology traveling across country for a deliverance session. They came back bragging that the man declared in his long drawn out southern drawl that she had more demons than anyone he had ever encountered – this was how they tried to treat her mental illness.

There was a young man of Czechoslovakian and English decent, a photography student, whose favorite seat at the restaurant I worked at was at the counter on seat 20 - a Bob's Big Boy. I clung to the fact that he read a bible and I gave him my heart and trust because of this act. A year later I went to Paris to pursue a dream and came back in part because I was horny, confused, in love, and I did not want to have sex and live in sin. I did an incredibly ridiculously thing and married the man in order to have legal Christian sex. The day we got married he put away his bible, snorted cocaine, smoked a bunch of dope and there was a slow emergence of restrictions. You can't have plants in the house, don't play your Christian praise music, no Christmas ornaments or Christmas trees allowed, don't read your bible when I am around, the bastard wouldn't even let me keep this great big awesome turtle that had come into my life out of that wonderful lagoon. I put the turtle in the bathtub with some lettuce and asked if he could be there just for a bit until I got home from work, and could revel in his wonder just a tad longer, but no, he did away with him, where I know not. After eight years of marriage, he began to beg me to leave. Literally, get on his knees, clasp his hands, peer up at me and beg, from the core of his being, to be let out of the relationship. I refused! To spite the long blonde hairs I was beginning to find in our bed (back then mine were long, thick, dark and curly - now I wear them short covering grey with tea made from sage, chamomile, and rosemary.) It was the Christian way. I was sure Jesus would heal the marriage - until that one day on the golf course that is, a message from a heathen that riveted my soul up against the wall. I confronted the issue head on.

The only way out is through.

He was a television star I came to find out later, a man who acted on *Hill Street Blues*, and to this day does not know the effects of his kind gesture of stopping to chat. He wore sneakers with no socks, was ruggedly disheveled looking, and his dog wore an old frayed rope tied around his neck that served as both collar and leash.

I imagine he probably knew of the blues, or depression, and stopped his jog to take a good look at me and then ask a simple question, "What's wrong?" After hearing my plight, he said, "I don't know much about God or Jesus lady, but I do know he said something about shaking the dust off your feet, and moving on when it comes time." And there it was. A few words from an empathetic heathen sending a jolt through me that rang true. I took courage embracing the notion that the time had come for change: time to let go.

I sought out a Christian counselor, who spoke from his heart indicating, "People like him don't change, leave and go back to school and get an education," which shocked me through and through, a Christian advising divorce? I did exactly as advised. I left him settling for eight gold South African Kruggerands, letting him keep his prized surfer van that my hard earned waitress tips had purchased, and went go back to school. My

subsequent pursuit of a higher education led me to a place of profound questioning.

Education has that way about it now doesn't it?

Domino Two

The second major domino was set up outside of the ballet studio at the University I enrolled in; it was set up next to the giant bamboo and humongous pineapple guava bush. I had sat on the edge of a cliff querying G-d with regards to what my major ought be and economics rang most true so I had become an economics major that indulged in my secret passion enrolling in non major dance classes. In my undergraduate pursuit, studying Hebrew became a part of my quest as well in that I wondered what it would be like to read the Old Testament in this language. Hebrew became the first language I penned poetry in since the Haiku written in the third grade. As I launched into pursuit of a hunger for knowledge I noted that my life seemed to grow increasingly out of control. A Tourette's like voice surfaced that I came to call my shit fuck voice that seemed separate from me. It blurted out most often after having conversations with people. This disconnected voice would say expletive things directed at my own being.

“You’re fucked. You’re stupid. Die. Kill yourself. Die. You stupid meaningless bitch, I hate you.”

I used caffeine, sugar, and alcohol more and more and my ability to be a super-achiever was beginning to erode. I was terrified that I might end up like my brother and sister, madder than the Mad Hatter forever imprisoned down the rabbit hole. The words of my youngest sister, Natalie, echoed in my memory. One day she confided in me, when we were discussing Shelly's condition, that during a turbulent period a beast rose up inside and confronted her with a very clear choice. The choice of going insane, or not, and she chose not with no pity or time lost over Shelly's choice. Shortly thereafter, she began to process and remembers things she had suppressed – exactly what I was not privy to. I too felt I had choice, and I vowed I would choose health, and never venture down that path either - as if we have choice. One day I would know otherwise.

In seeking answers and committing to interpersonal growth, outside the ballet studio, next to the giant bamboo and humongous pineapple guava bush, I suddenly saw that there were things about my family that were not altogether functional. I came to the sudden realization that if I wanted to find functionality in my life I would need to cut off all contact with every single last member of my family, including the pets. It felt like a primal survival act and something very necessary; I did not understand why all contact, but it needed to be ALL contact. I just knew in the marrow of my bones and the pit

of my gut that it was something I had to do and I set out to do it. I also had a vague, ephemeral, ineffable sense that the heat of my passion for dance would be my way of staving off madness - it was to become my path replacing religious dogma, ritual, and a black and white rigid off balanced and warped orbit. Somewhere, in the dance, I would find the meaning of grey zones.

After my divorce, I went to live with my parents. I was in excruciating emotional pain describing it as, rip your heart out, toss it in a blender, put it on high and whirl - I didn't think I could cope with living anywhere else. During summer months my mother would jet off to another state to be with my father, and leave me to manage the family retail store. I was highly functional back then working hard at selling skateboards, surfboard wax, stickers, swimwear and other items by day, and working my waitress job by night. God how I loved fitting young surfers in skin tight wetsuits and loved even better the smell of burning maple as I prepped skate decks for their plastic ribs with the high powered drill press. I also loved putting a stop to the good for nothing blokes my mother had a fondness for that she brought on for hired help. Young bucks with good hearts, good looks, but with a propensity to snitch from the till. With the internal control techniques I had been learning in college, the shop always made a shift from running in the red, to running in the green - which may have had more to do with summer months being busier than other months than my iron hand grip on those louses. I felt very together, known, and appreciated by customers at both the shop and restaurant. I came across as a friendly, happy go lucky sort of person. My parents did not pay me for my work indicating they would put earnings in a savings account to keep it safe while going through the divorce so *Mr. Jerk* would not get at it.

One spring it exploded within me, a rose gone from bud to full bloom in a fraction of a second, exactly what to do with my summer; and it did not involve a stitch of anything to do with working at the surf shop. Over the years, with my sparkly bright goodie two shoe glittered ways, I developed a peculiar habit of listening to my intuition, my gut - the *Holy Spirit* I might have called it back then. In the moments I sought out an answer of what direction to take next, I would simply ask. I boldly but gently thrust the question out into the ethers releasing it with a great deal of faith and confidence querying my gut, my heart, my intuition, the universe, whoever, and whatever was listening for an answer. Over time, through trial and error in life, I found that listening to what I came to know as a still small voice, my intuition, and following through, brought on synchronistic chance encounters that I clearly, neatly, tidily, and cleanly classified as meant to be and magical.

I grew to take great delight in letting my inner abstract un-named something usher me here and there. This one spring, questioning my intent to pursue a doctorate in economics, while walking away from the ballet studio to the modern studio, I asked my heart "what should I do with my summer?" The response arrived immediately and rather loudly "go to Dimitri's school", which of course was not a part of my parent's plan, and I was not even sure

Dimitri the Swiss Clown had a school. I had seen Dimitri perform when I was in high school when a part of the theater department's mime troupe and was utterly spellbound and hopelessly smitten by his brilliance, humor, rich imagination, and European joie de vivre. I discovered Dimitri did have a school in the Italian part of Switzerland and settled on it. I not only wanted to go, I knew I must go. I told both of my parents of my intention to go to this clowning school in Switzerland and politely and shyly asked if I could access money they set aside for savings.

My father shot back at a tempo faster than his usual slow drawn out voice "I don't owe you a damn thing; you owe me for rent!" I patiently asked for the cost of rent and did some quick calculations. I would still have something coming to me, and in that I knew this was something I HAD to do, I asked again. Nope, sorry kid, you are out of luck. Never mind that my brother had been allowed to live at home for free while in college because he was pursuing an engineering degree, or that they had paid for my sister's expenses while at art school, and also never mind that they were asking me to pay an amount for rent that was more than the entire mortgage on their house. This incident and a host of other little things fell into place and I realized I would need to divorce the seven members of my family and the family dog in order to sort out my own life. So divorce them I did, sold everything I owned to pursue my passion, and went off to Switzerland coming back with 25 cents in my pocket, and a slow spiral into hell and out again began.

A twenty year plus process, and as I sit here in the moment, a gentle train ride home from MarrMarr and Allie's pad I sit next to the tall, graying, blue eyed and handsome English-Irishman who became a pivotal healing force in my life. We sit enjoying drinking a complex wine out of jam jars lulled by an orchestra comprised of the sound of the wheels whirring on the tracks, the hoot of the horn, and the chatter of fellow passengers. These things along with the sight of the slow descent of a December sun through gold and grey puffy clouds spilling out bold rays of filtered lights overwhelm me with an intoxicating mix of deep sadness for my story – as well as overwhelming gratitude, shock even, that I have survived, in the fullest sense of the word.

At least that is how it seems in this very moment.

I am living the life of my wildest dreams, hopes and most vivid expectations – albeit, not the one's I had originally intended, but the ones that seem just about right for who I am in time and space in this great big, bold and beautiful now. And, having arrived home, in this very big bold beautiful moment, my beloved piebald of a panther cat Misty pounces on my lap, gazes at me adoringly and commands, stroke me you bitch, so stroke her I do, pausing to take a sip of a cheap grade but adequate wine out of a cheap cut crystal wine glass, working away well past 10 pm on a Saturday in my office newly reorganized by my one and only *Mr. Clean*. God I love my life.

However, that wasn't always the case now was it? For a long period of time it sucked, royally, it sucked, plain, simple and stupid as that.

Mr. Clean?

Who is *Mr. Clean*?

I, or rather should I say *we* will get to that shortly

CHAPTER TWO: Easy Like the Ocean



Small Child of the Sixties

In the "now" I'd say Life is *supercalifragilicious expialadocious*. But not the kind of *supercalifragilicious expialadocious* that was once evidenced by an infamous artificial sugar sweet smile. A smile that stretched hither and thither a mile wild giving me a tri-colored Saccharin pink, Stevia in the Raw green, and Equal blue sort of look. A comatose rigid mask fashioned from plaster slathered with seven sickly coats of lacquer laced with denial. No it is no longer THAT kind of *superkalfragaliscious* but the kind that gurgles up from that sweet spot one taps into when mining awareness.

Even though there are certain times of the year where things are a tad turbulent for good reason, life is really like one of the lines in a rap song I recently penned that declares life is easy like the ocean. A spunky piece that makes people feel good when they hear it that was inspired by three very specific things: my sporadic personal form of social activism (which I at times gently rope others into), a long schlep home after a rehearsal with a new collaborator watching the moon's slow descent against the Los Angeles city skyline with the grand finale being the streak of a meteor that not only made the news but took my breath away, and floating outside of myself observing how my world view has unequivocally shifted – forever.

The activism is a reference to the actuality of the threat of war this past fall. I am very much a rebel child of the sixties with a heart as soft and gushy as the center of a chocolate covered marshmallow filled scooter pie. I am also one apt to take action. This stems from my innate social stupidity, prim naïveté nature, and propensity to trust when I ought run. Two other factors include the influence of my once upon a time heroes Martin Luther King Jr.

and JFK, as well as the God given ENFP personality type which I once considered to be a kissing cousin blend of blessing and curse. I have changed it since then, my personality type, or rather, experiences have changed it. They tend to do that to you – ya'know? And this is something neither God nor the gods or goddesses have a say in if you are brave enough to be honest and have at life the way your heart would have at it and boldly exercise one's free will.

My memory bank holds fond memories of the sixties. It holds universal American kid memories from this era such as how sumptuous it felt to let the word groovy slither off of one's tongue; the taste, smell, texture and temperature of smooth cool white paste; the pale cerulean blue hue of slick mimeograph copies; the fact that play was old fashioned, physical and imaginative with games of red rover, tetherball, hopscotch, cat's cradle, and Chinese jump rope. We made full use of our imaginations that grew us up wild like mustangs. Then of course, when we would need rest from our highly active lives, with very little homework, our imagination and humor was further sparked and fed by the television series of the times. As I Google television shows of the 60s in the *now* I grow overly excited and stimulated in my grown up 2 petite pearly grey suit lined with shimmery iridescent rayon, and refrain from breaking out in a sweat. I suddenly realize that exposure to this stuff, which my mom called crap, and I called genius, probably accounts for a sizable chunk of my excessive eccentricities. I blame Hollywood, in part, for these reprobate things and have grown to cherish these oddities like gold. There is the classic off kilter jingle and even weirder worlds of the *Twilight Zone*, the fun of regular and not so regular folks found gallivanting about and full of pranks, and the belly rumbling fun of the *Beverly Hill Billies* and *Gilligan's Island*. There is also the brilliance, wit, charm and uproariously funny laugh until you wet yourself re-runs of *I Love Lucy* equally matched by the seductive magic and allure of *Bewitched* and *I Dream of Genie*. I know the *Flying Nun* was not universally adored, nor were *The Monkeys* but I would take them over *The Brady Bunch* any day. Yes, it is true, I squeal like a kid in the proverbial candy shop, jiggle, and jounce about like tots on Santa's lap when I think of the places the *Flintstones*, *Bonanza*, the *Addams Family*, and *Lost in Space* took me: and yes, these series scarred me permanently off kilter, magical, imaginative, and mischievous.

From the sixties there are also memories solely my own which I may never confide in you about. There are also memories I share en masse with my entire fourth grade class. There was the joy of warbling for instance, with our once very popular teacher whom we universally adored - well, except for one in the class, a dreadful snitch.

It was the school year of 1969-70 and I was very energized by the fact that our grammar school was located not only next to a barn full of horses close to the ocean, but next to the college that grew to be world famous for its riots with one raucous group of malcontents burning down a Bank. I knew

nothing intellectually of what it was all about but somehow it made us all feel better. Or at least, I did, latching on to the spirit of the times and letting it permanently seep into the woodwork and wormholes of my tender impressionable soul. I must admit I was somewhat perplexed by my sister's tales that the long haired boy all the girls had a mad crush on, Sammy Arranelio, had been sent to school after dropping acid, and that her best friend, Tamara Yates, was given marijuana to smoke by her parents – I never seemed to question how some parents parented differently but just took it all in stride; devouring my sister's fanciful secrets with a perverted glee topped off with a dollop of warped relish called sisterly giggly girly gossip.

Our teacher was Asian at a time when our community was mostly white. I sensed she was genuinely fond of me. I could never figure out why. Perhaps it was because she too was a different shade of color than the pasty Caucasians suntanned California golden about us. Or, perhaps it was because we were both small in stature. Feeling her fondness for me brought me great comfort and solace at a time when my Hawaiian last name in bully language translated into poo poo, and it is true my mother nearly named me Winnie in which case I would have become Winnie the Pooh Pooh. Thank goodness that the bona fide translation of the name was not only small pimple but small volcano.

At times my small volcano would erupt in a flurry of fists, spits, and scratches charring my marshmallow heart molten when a tease went too far. I took care of my own, like the time I jerked the ball from the dirty and grimy hands of the boy I was over-the-top-heart-ticker over; a hick from the South with ears that endeared me, large and protruding, an irresistible Dumbo the elephant kind of cute. My mouth went into a *Cheerios O* and my eyes grew wide when my darling dashed his head against the wall outside of our fourth grade class and he burst into tears. I was marched directly to the principal's office, my first and last time, although, at times, I wish I had not been born a most of the time goodie two shoes because I would very much have liked to make these visits become a regular practice.

I found the Principal to be a jovial fatherly sort with an appropriate demeanor. I imagine he was greatly amused by the shortest and scrawniest kid in class taking her role of ball monitor so seriously that she in one single ferocious jerk annihilated her chances at furthering her advances with the ugliest boy in the school, which is probably a very good thing. I am pretty sure he went on to live a nefarious life and I might to this very day be having conjugal visits with the father of my brood of 14 squalors that took after their father. Squalors with great big ears flying about the kitchen in a trailer parked in a despondent desert, having to be bothered to tether them to their high chairs when they were babes suckling at my saggy and tired teats, and for sure I would have grown fat, great big rolls of it.

While this teacher favored mini-skirts, I favored modest dresses with wild paisley patterns over jeans. Even though I was the eldest of the girls,

since I was shorter than my younger sisters were, I was given hand me ups rather than hand me downs. When we went shopping, I would persuade my sisters to buy certain styles knowing I would eventually get to wear them. Perhaps this is why to this day I feel rather comfortable in the thrift shop gems I bring home to spice up my primarily second hand wardrobe.

My teacher used to sit on the edge of a kid high creaky desk and teach us to sing the songs of the times. *Lemon Tree Flower is Pretty* and *Where Have All the Flowers Gone* were personal favorites as was *Puff the Magic Dragon*, which I still sing from time to time to this very day. The class also shared the universal memory that she sported a dark, thick patch of pubic hair that we would catch glimpses of when she squirmed at the edge of that creaky desk. I was mortified when a neighbor girl ratted on her, and terribly ashamed when queried, not having the guts to lie and challenge this girl declaring that the teacher did indeed wear under pants and that they were mauve with lemon drop shaped sparkly fringes about their edges. I found it to be a great travesty that a favorite teacher of ours got the sack, but not before she chose my story to be the story to be read as the story of the year at the end of school. It was a science fiction tale with a rocket ship shot into outer space, and I have no recollection where it went or what it discovered, but I do remember that the honor of reading my story never manifest. The school shut down due to a bomb scare delivered by the malcontent rioters I loved so much and we all left in such a hurry that my one and only copy of the story was sadly left behind.

To this day, as a child of the sixties, knowing in my bones back then that this thing called Vietnam and war in general was a horrific and despicable act (an act I am sure my Republican parents touted as necessary), when our nation threatens to go to war, or goes to war, it tears me up into little itty bitty pieces emotionally and I am called to action. It may not be life changing action but some sort of action so I can live with myself.

This past fall, one of the actions I took was a process I created called sand castles for peace whereby one takes great big scoops of sand and with each scoop asks the universe for a rush of peace: scoop - peace in one's spirit, scoop - peace in one's mind, scoop - peace in one's body, scoop - peace in one's soul, scoop - continuing until you have a modest amount of wet sand to work with. As one melt's into the rhythm of the meditation ideas for the creation emerges as do issues that relate to one's own peace process that the goodness of sand, sea, bird and sky invites you to shed. With the process is the hope that *Mother Ocean* will swallow any and all woes poured, pounded, and patted into the sand castle and take it to the dolphins, whales, Selkies, and Merfolk even to process the toxicity and spout out a miracle - a phenomenon I firmly believe in. It became a short-lived Sunday morning ritual in that a few weeks after its creation our country called off the dogs and I settled back into my day-to-day, non-socially active rhythm.

You see, the call to action comes sporadically. Of course, one can't help but think that one's own minuscule series of actions contributed to the

unexpected turn of current events, but you know, sometimes it is those minuscule small acts that brings about big shifts - I've observed this in my own life as I am sure you have. During the final installment of our sand castle series, I was visited by a ginormous blue dragonfly, and as crazy as it sounds, we shared consciousness for a 20-minute lapse of time.

I had gently roped two girlfriends into joining me on this Sunday and I remember them gaping and exclaiming in overly loud whispers "oh my God, the dragonfly, it's listening to you!" and listen it did. The great big blue dragonfly whizzed within inches of my face, put itself in reverse, and whizzed a distance of 10 or 15 feet back. Back and forth we chatted with this dance. At one point, the mini-winged magician insect ventured to the six mounds I had created that day. My meditation prompted me to fashion a mini sand castle for my five siblings and myself. In each mound, I placed our respective known and unknown life issues and darned if that thing did not go round to each and every mound with its own tangible intention. I felt in my physical being a resonance of something profound happening. Understanding gurgled up from the analytical side of my brain that the energy of my intentions set in these mounds was about to be carted away to the lairs of dragons to cleanse the energy - Mother Nature teamwork - she and I. Then there came what I call a hit or download, an aha, a light bulb going bling, that my father was choosing to come back in the short form to be there for me as I finished my own healing journey, writing this novella being a part of that journey. Sure enough, as soon as I acknowledged that I began to give the notion a little test and asked the dragonfly to create a circle of protection about us, and darned if that dragonfly did not begin to fly a circumference of about 25 feet about us. For you as the reader it may sound bizarre and surreal, but remember, I am a child of the sixties comfortable with the *Twilight Zone*, and even stranger things happen there!

It was during the conclusion of the sand castle session with the dragonfly, after celebrating life and friendship with my two girlfriends with slices of succulent organic melon, that the line life is easy like the ocean came to me. It was after the melon when we dashed into the waters that still held late summer early autumn warmth that the lovely thought came in for a landing. I realized it was time to let go, let go of the belief system that life is hard, because, in the now the truth of the matter is, life is easy, easy like the ocean. I embraced the idea that this could become the foundation for a new, more functional, sound, and harmonious belief system.

Both of the girls I was with happened to be songwriters and singers. After our dip in the sea, we shared our experiences and Cherrise offered her aha that if Mother Nature were our religion, everything would be all right. I shared my observations, as did Lorielee, and together we decided these simple things would make good songwriting material. The three of us jammed a bit in a gospel blues style, me with my very out of shape voice, with Cherrise and Lorielee warbling like angels. I let the idea of song percolate, and then, that

one night schlepping it back from a dance rehearsal in Sierra Madre, a little ditty tumbled out.

It was that very same night I felt the largest moon I ever saw take my breath away. It sank over the Los Angeles city skyline celebrated by the outrageous electric color of streaming red, green and yellow highway lights. When I rounded the coastal bend closer to home, and made my way up the grade, just past La Conchita - a meteor that gave me a jolt and made the news jetted across the sky the exact moment I finished the last verse; and I thought, how perfect is that? I am a bit shy about sharing the ditty in that my ability as a song writer is not yet developed, and I'll even forgive you if you overlook it, as I have overlooked the song portions that have appeared in the countless fantasy novels I've read over the years, consistently and always, without fail, I skip over them after reading the first sentence or two.

I give it to your God Self

You give it to my Higher Self

Your sh-ts yours

Mine is mine

Crack a head, Slap a chest, Knee a groin

ExScuze me?

Be my friend not my foe

Forgive don't forget

Lest we bleep it up again

Life is easy like the ocean

Her love is so divine

Tend the garden of your soul

Not the chatter of your mind

Religion is it working?

Mother Nature's mighty fine

Breathe it in

Breathe it out

Carve out time

To slow it down

Make the shift

Find your bliss

Forgive don't forget

Lest we bleep it up again

Life is easy like the ocean

Her love is so divine

Tend the garden of your soul

Not the chatter of your mind!

Salvation aint for sinners

But for saints that have forgotten

How to dance with their shadows

*And morph it into light
Your way may not be my way
But we rock it just the same
With as many paths to freedom
As there are stars in the night
Let it be
Accept me
Just for whom I am
I'll do the same and toss out blame
Let's forgive but don't forget
Lest we bleep it up again
Life is easy like the ocean
Her love is so divine
Tend the garden of your soul
Not the chatter of your mind!*

The very next thing I penned (yes I did use an actual pen) was a letter to Nina in Sierra Madre, which was a choreographic assignment she suggested for a duet we are co-creating. As you know by now, I am a dancer. What you don't know is that I am a dancer with a disclaimer. I am not of the dancing with the stars glitter and glamour show biz gleam type but the type often described as you're a true artist (whatever that may be), slightly old school and very hard core. Not that I don't think dancing with the stars is not true art, or hard core, and not that I have watched more than a snippet or two of the show myself: but well, entertainment and glitz is entertainment and glitz as one viable expression, and taking an audience somewhere transformative, life affirming, and cathartic where they themselves are woven into the magic of theater is something altogether different. As I float outside of myself, I observe that is the mindset of the preacher, the critic, which I think I can and must shed along with the notion that life is hard.

As a dance creator, my favorite dance to date is delightfully danced butt naked, a recurring theme in this novella. It was inspired by my many years of life drawing and the fact that often times the most intriguing figures to draw were the big fleshy shapes. I was struck how the beauty captured in class by the artists around me (my drawings never looked like the model - or people for that matter) definitely did not synch up with the modern market glossy sleek look contrived largely by a male viewpoint.

This disconnect, I believe, causes some women to feel great discomfort in their own skin because they don't look, and never will look like the stars of modern times - unless of course they spend oodles of money on plastic surgery they don't need and starve themselves to next to nothing. This choreographed work of physical theater attempts to help women make the shift and associate their form with the beauty captured by the masters one encounters in the drawings, paintings, and sculptures in our favorite museums. I sure as hell did not have the courage to dance this dance in my hometown

first time out.

We premiered it in Queens, and then toured with it performing it next in a gallery window in Vienna. It was at the opening of my first international solo exhibition as a visual artist displaying a body of work which transposes my issues into universal metaphor expressed with charcoal, conte, and pastel on paper. Neither my dance partner JoJo or I could hear it from inside the window box we were performing in, but apparently there were great big peals of laughter when two Austrians walked past the performance in front of the audience carting a mattress along the sidewalk. No one noted whether it was twin, king, or queen size, but they joked it was certainly big enough for the two women slapping their fleshly bare buttocks until they turned a bright cherry red. The best bit was that in Austria, with freedom of the body this culture enjoys, the little boy, not much more than seven or eight, managed to gleefully dash from outside to inside taking in the multiple vantage points of the naked feline human form, and us being butt naked very much a non-issue. Never in my homeland could I experience such freedom and the experience took me somewhere altogether new, which is the whole point of it all as an artist, to strive to create work that induces artistic growth.

We also had opportunity to perform it properly in a theater in Vienna, another round in New York, and twice in Los Angeles before I brought it home to my home community. It was only due to a cancellation of another artist with a major festival we were producing that we inserted it. My collaborator and co-creator JoJo flew into LAX on a red eye flight. Her sister picked her up, they drove 2 hours north arriving just in time for JoJo to meet me onstage for the dress rehearsal. The last time we were in this piece of physical theater was in performance at an alternative venue called Green Space four months prior. The producer liked the work so much the first time she saw it she invited us to perform it again the following year on a different program. Artists are crazy that way when it comes to performing. If an opportunity avails itself we snatch it. I myself will be taking a red eye flight on a Friday night in a few weeks to arrive Saturday morning, will perform Saturday evening in the Bronx at BAAD, fly home Sunday, and be at my day job Monday morning at 8:30 am.

I had given an arts editor in my home community a preview of the piece before taking it to New York in that I wanted to make sure the work was strong enough before premiering it, and I contacted him for advice before bringing it home asking "do you think our community is ready for a naked piece?" He responded with "they'll love it."

The work we perform in silence, with two volunteers from the audience seated onstage facing the audience upstage of the dance where they have a full frontal view of the dance. Their reactions convey to folks seated in the theater the nature of what they are not able to see from their view. When we found there to be more laughter than silence we knew we had hit pay dirt - all that fuss over nothing. We were pleased as punch when the reviewer coined the

expression "vulnerable and riotously funny" because it is exactly that. Do know that the written record of this ephemeral art form is greatly appreciated and treasured by the performing artist: be the commentary good, bad, or indifferent. Well, maybe not the bad, we take careful note and snort.

I digress in the through line of this story in part because I am procrastinating with cutting to the chase and in part because I selfishly want to set the stage for what is to come. I want to set the stage by painting a self portrait of me and my life that you can stand in front of and view as endearing, likable, functional, grounded, sane, balanced, creative, with just the right amount of eccentricity that seems appropriate for an artist. I had to do this first, in that it is my fantasy, that somehow going about the story telling in this fashion will result in you not thinking lesser of me when the truth as I experienced it comes out.

I now draw myself back to Nina's assignment. An assignment that will bring us both closer to what I wish I could write and erase away - permanently - but I cannot, and the compulsive itch that I must write propels me forwards knowing *the only way out is through*. Nina's choreographic task was for each of us to write a letter to each other inspired in part by my most recent self-imposed fad - letter writing.

After unplugging from social media I took to letter writing with the envelope itself becoming more of the art than the content inside the envelope. I took extra care in the design of the odd sized envelopes I favor working at my goal of being an owner of nothing and a steward of the essential to manifest my life work by using old photos and clippings I've gathered to artify the outside of the envelopes - getting rid of stuff bit by bit. The mail carrier that delivers to the law office loves handling these. The art of letter writing has evolved so that I am now writing stories and text on the outside mixed in with the collages.

He always lets me know he will take good care of the art and how much he'll enjoy reading the outside of the envelope as he walks along making his deliveries. This motivates me to take even greater care with the outside of the envelope. I think actually, that this über relaxed jovial mail carrier named Charles takes my letters home and steams them open, reads the contents, and then creatively puts them back together before they are processed for delivery. Why do I think this? Because his smile is just a wee bit too conspiratorial every time he eyes a new letter about to go out.

Nina proposed as topic for our letter exchange. That the letters be about our respective lives up to the age of six years old. Writing long hand is very different than writing using an iPad which is different even from using a computer and just about as nice as using a typewriter, which I haven't used for years although I have my beloved's father's typewriter: he was a pioneer science fiction writer, went on to be a Neiman Fellow, then a speech writer for Harry Truman, and typed many a book on this very typewriter. We use it as a prop for a current project. I've yet found the time to take it in for repair but

once I do I will return to poetry. I have a whole slew of fond memories associated with using a typewriter for writing poetry long ago initially bemoaning how words disappear too swiftly in the process when making the shift to use of a word processor.

Ouch!

I pull myself up short by snapping at my thong strap fantasy and with great effort refuse to let myself digress, yet again. I grit my teeth and drive, kamikaze style, directly to the point. The point of the story being - I am coming out of the closet with something I have managed to conceal very well from those except my closest and most treasured friends. I have a DID (Dissociative Identity Disorder) and suffer from chronic PTSD (Post Traumatic Stress Disorder) and the arts have been a critical means of climbing the rungs out of hell – one hot rung at a time.

S.O.S.

The simple act of writing this story has caused me to come all unglued again!

Shit, shit, and more shit!

CHAPTER THREE: Uncloseting the Chameleon



Anne Comes Clean

Dear Nina,

First memory to six years? Wow! Which version? My first memory - in the womb actually, I didn't feel particularly wanted. The bit of writing on the outside of the envelope generated during a *Write from the Body* workshop taught by my friend Lizzie expresses some of that. I can't share that image here because the collage uses a clip from a magazine of another artist's painting and that wouldn't be right to include it, so I'll share that bit of writing now as I transpose the handwritten letter into an electronic format for this other writing project.

It was dark in the wet womb cave lit by lava lambs with an ambient sound of three boys, brothers to be, charging about the roost. The hanger snatched again and again, but the angel unhooked the snag each time it took, and I took root instead...too soon for slaughter.

Then a single sentence drips down the back of the envelope over colored pencil shadings made by the scratches my inner 5 year old scrawled out in sky blue, citrus orange, and peach yellow. The best part of the whole process is

getting to use the tiny metal sharpener to make sure the point is nice and sharp when we(I) scribble. The sharpener is kept in a blue glass vase a co-worker's mother hand painted that was given to me during last year's secret Santa office exchange.

The words drips down

P

A

N

C

A

K

E

S

Hot, wet, syrupy

First memory to six – I can't believe I am really going there, are you really sure you want to go there my very newfound kindred spirit? Although we've known of each other's creative work for a few years – we've only just met really, connecting at Rosina's concert at ARC Pasadena, giggling in the dark backstage in the dressing rooms, unearthing so much commonality: mime, music, writing, dancers performing into their 50's, creative spouses and so much more we've discovered since then in the few short weeks we've launched into the rehearsal process.

All right, I'm jumping right in! My first memory, odd as it may strike you, is from inside the womb and yes, I'm sorry, I think I've written that already! You'll come to find as you get to know me that I repeat myself, but perhaps you've noticed this already, and have been too polite to point it out. So odd, that as a choreographer, I don't often use theme and repetition, but in conversation, I repeat myself often. I know, I know, we are on the verge of old and dithering, but I think probably I was old and dithering inside the womb in that I don't ever remember NOT finding myself repeating myself often.

Pre-birth I remember shouting and angry voices and conflict outside of my mother's great big tummy. The way she tells it, is that my father wasn't around at the time I was born in Milwaukee, but in California with his brother boozing it up with California babes, which sounds about right. In high school, my father was a stage manager for a burlesque show. Back then; my mother was quite the 100% pure Yugoslavian babe herself. I have a photo indelibly etched in my memory with her legs stretched out long and lean on a blanket sunning her pale body with a cigarette hanging sexily from between her index and middle finger.

My father's high school graduation photo depicts him as an incredibly attractive man. Attractive people drawn like moths to a flame - how in the hell

I came out good old fashioned homely is beyond me. A throw back perhaps to the primitive indigenous Hawaiian look combined with the homely stock of Yugoslavian peasants – or maybe the Germans? The French? No...not the French... the Portuguese whaling great grandfather that settled in Hawaii?

Anyways, I am told that my father's middle name, Wahinialoha, translates into loved by many women. Given my mother once told me he was a sex addict and went as far as to hire a detective to try and figure out who left the pink bible in the house, I can only imagine what sort of antics he must have gotten into: rushing past flirt into the overtly sexual. What, with he and his high testosterone levels indicative of teens enjoying an early sexual peak which may very well have fed whatever addictive tendencies he may have had at that time. Addictive tendencies he apparently passed on to me, or is that T.M.I.?

The story of the burlesque dancers is backed up by the fact that my brother regales in the story that my father would show him a photo album he had of these young hotties with their artistic itsy bitsy pasties plastered over their ripe nipples. I have no idea what they plastered over their patches. He would also tell of the great tragedy of my mother discovering them together drooling and laughing over these treasured archives. I can only imagine the ire of her finding her eldest teenage son with her good for nothing sex addict husband fingering the archives. I chuckle at the image I create of her snatching the damn thing away and burning it - probably in the very same fireplace that her father's zither stood proud besides.

If I were she, I would have burned the damn thing too! But I am me, and although I too think it was a terrible shame that she destroyed that bit of history, and am saddened by my brother's loss, I am not saddened enough to light a candle because although it is true that my brother found it to be an awe inspiring piece of important history, and he hasn't forgiven my mother for burning these archives, I suspect she gave him a gift. As artists, I think our work at times can be about trying to make sense of the past. Oh my word, given the current imagery in his portfolio I'd say he has recaptured those pasties quite nicely. With regard to lusty passion and healthy rutting – again, oh my lord, as I pull out my fan and cool my flushed cheeks, the language he uses when we get together on very rare occasion, it makes even ME blush.

Taking on her husband's last name somehow enabled her to have her own small volcanic eruptions that occurred from what seems like time to frequent time; but maybe the rage was something she brought herself to the mix. From my very own 'fits of rage' memory bank the image of her dashing an empty wine bottle (most likely a bottle that tumbled off of my father's sobriety wagon) at a sliding glass window in Goleta flashes through my memory. That along with the memory of the great oil spill and the death of many seabirds, and one duck in particular for which we held a somber funeral, with me playing the only tune I knew on our trunk sized keyboard – we all caterwauled *Silent Night, Hoooley Night, Aaaaalllll is calm, all is bright.*

The window, when the wine bottle hit, it shattered into a kajillion bits and pieces. There is also the memory of the creative aftermath with all of us kids gathering those bits of broken glass taking care not to prick ourselves on the razor sharp edges of the slivers. Together as one unit we colored those shards bright and made art out of them fashioning beauties akin to representational stain glass windows of saints, angels, Mary and Jesus such as one might see in the finest cathedrals humanity has ever built. At least, that was our collective assessment. This theme, I see in the now, established itself early on in my life – a pattern of potential to weave a thing of beauty and wonder and inspiration out of comedic tragedy, or horror even. But we are in 1st memory to six years old so I draw my dithering mind back once again to the kernel purpose of this thread and the larger context of the story itself.

Another tale close to the time spent in the womb recounted time and again by my mother is that I was almost born in the back seat of a cop car. My mother made it to the hospital in the nick of time and I unabashedly admit that I rather like the vision in my mind's eye of my pending birth being proclaimed to the world with a high speed chase, red lights circling, mad beacon whirling like a dervish in the night: the siren blaring here she comes, here she comes, here she comes. I was born to D.W.P. and J.A.K. the first girl, with three squalling older brothers.

Boom, boom, they popped them out like that back then, good amorous Catholics that followed all of the rules to a T. There were two girls and a miscarriage after me. One of my favorite jokes in future years became, that after begetting six snot nosed brats, they stopped being Catholics. Yes stopped being Catholics at least that followed all of the rules to a T, and leaned even deeper into being very naughty Catholics joining the ranks of all the very naughty priests and very naughty nuns; which I'll get to here and there in this tale, maybe.

My first memory outside the womb is a thought actually - if I could only grow legs I'd run away, which is true, as soon as I could grow legs I ran, and ran, and ran - most often after my three older brothers, second most often from the threat of a bare butt beating with a belt. I grew so speedy that in the sixth grade I clocked the fastest in the 50 yard dash amongst both the girls and the boys. I also measured in as the shortest. My greatest athletic feat to this day, except for maybe stealing the basketball from between the legs of a very tall rival, or maybe the feat of being able to do a round off back handspring the first time someone ever showed me how in my sophomore high school gymnastics class.

You don't know me well enough yet, so I am only going to share the memory from the memory bank of what you'll come to know as my *host*, perhaps one that my *host* shared with my *alters*. Heaven and hell seem to sandwich together quite nicely as does the lovely image of the compassionate eyes of a very friendly Jesus who once appeared to me in a vision telling me with his eyes that he couldn't remove me from the situation, but that he loved

me greatly, and that that love would and could sustain me. I felt that love, and I felt its origins as something as deep and fathomless as a bottomless well with no beginning, and no ending. This probably accounts for my favorite childhood photo in the one to six memory bank of a guardian angel watching the small child as it walks over a bridge. In that we are rehearsing out of the dance room in the Catholic High School you presently teach at - I am assuming you know of this image? I still love it.

In order to share this story, which I've only told 4 or 5 people in my life, I have to first come clean with an excruciatingly embarrassing fact that I am a 100% integrated (by my definition of integration) multiple having once had 36 subdivided aspects of the once whole self that still manages moments from time to time of being triggered. I also still manage the occasional somatic body memory, even after twenty years, there are moments of hell – but just little flickers, flicks and licks of flame, nothing like how I once described it in one of the many journals I have kept over the years. I've burned a few, but something inside has bid me to stop from burning the rest – just yet. I hold a wild fantasy of tearing the pages out one by one stitching them together to create materials for an installation at *Burning Man*. I would let it whip in the hot desert wind for a bit and at the appointed hour, torch it, and emerge from the ash a triumphant phoenix. I would like, at this time, to share a bit of writing from one of the journals that has an entry that describes just how hot that hell was that I ventured into to liberate my fragmented self.

I step into the elevator and press the button for sub-level one. When the doors open I step out. It isn't too terribly hot. I wander from person to person showing photos of my parents. Do you know them? Have you seen them? And each time I ask, the souls singed grey rather than black through and through, reply with a reply that goes out like an echo over the Grand Canyon.

"No, forgive me father/mother, we haven't seen them, try sub-level two, try sub-level two"

I step back into the elevator and press the button for sub-level two. The button is slightly more obnoxious than sub-level one in that a host of demons – my kissing cousins - with razor sharp teeth, neon crimson horns, cackle like mad hyenas before singing A Cappella and off tune the wonders of purgatory and persecution.

I descend down, down, down, sorry that the marshmallows I brought along to toast and comfort me are nothing more than a distant memory. I know I've arrived at sub level two when the medium defining doors transform into mystic coals reminiscent of the campfire wood burned downed to red hot coals with the sweet scent of burnt marshmallow lingering about the edges.

My stomach growls and the craving for marshmallows are unbearable.

I strap on blocks of ice twelve layers thick not wanting my soul to singe and step into sub-level two and reach into my imagination for more ice: I begin using blocks of dry ice, cocktail ice, icicles, snow cone ice, any sort of

ice as stepping stones.

I show the same photo and am glad that I've packed multiple copies of my parents wedding day in a memory chip I can easily pull out of my ear impervious to heat – intense heat. Why? Each time I show a photo to a person in sub level two the photo ignites into flame with a single glance from the sub-level two inhabitant, who then sighs and shakes their head sadly. Mom, dad, where are you? I've come to rescue you, to get you out of hell. I venture from person to person asking if they've seen my parents, pulling a duplicate photo spit out of a printer implanted in my ear, watching each duplicate photo burst into flames.

They all chant.

“Try sub-level three” “Try sub-level three” “Try sub-level three”

The terror I am feeling is unbearable but I love my mom and dad and desperately want to rescue them and crawl with the spiked tail I have grown between my legs towards the elevator. I press the button for sub-level three and confront the fire of infinite suns intertwined into a singular expression of hate, heat, and horror.

I conjure the muses of the North and the South Pole and wrap myself in the fleece of their winters. I step out and the first eyes I meet are the eyes of the person that those in the over world unanimous associate with the pure manifestation of evil. Hitler. He has a baton in his hand and it is passed from parent to parent. A wretched cycle begging annihilation. I've grown horns by now and I own that I too have that potential within me. As much as I try, I can't seem to squash the horns and hide the gilded monstrosities, I own that I too have been a conduit by evil, but not by choice, but force, at a time when most children are embraced by the innocence of the sweetest scent of the most trusting of lambs.

Suddenly, I feel all of the tsunamis that have ever been balling up, and spit out a wall of compassion, empathy, and love, which I embrace as my own.

I can't see them, find them, touch them, but I know they are there, and I begin to weep.

For there souls to be so lost.

I hear a whisper from my mother, we can't get out, but we know you can, and we'll plant the seeds to help you. I can feel that they want my freedom but for some reason they can't obtain it, somewhere they do love me, and from somewhere within the insanity they choose just the right mantra for me... you have so much talent, you could do anything, be anything, be free... the truth. It shall set you free.

In that once upon a time I had very little understanding of DSMV terminology, and in that you may be in the same position, I think it might be useful in our relationship if I take a bit of time to lay the labels out on the table, neatly. By multiple I mean Multiple Personality Disorder, which is a term that has morphed into Dissociative Identity Disorder, abbreviated as DID. This condition, in my view, and the view of some others, isn't a disorder

at all but a remarkable, miraculous, and creative rewiring of the brain to help one cope with situations that could turn someone into a raving lunatic if they didn't learn how to divide and sub-divide.

There is a famous book about the condition called Sybil. Do you know of it? I seem to remember reading it once when I was curious about other multiples' stories, and noting the condition somewhat akin - just somewhat. I came across another book by another multiple, which my horrid internal critic found chaotically written coming to the conclusion that just because one is a multiple does not mean one should tell their story in writing and seek publication.

Why?

There is so much shame and embarrassment for folks struggling with such issues. There is such a horrid stigma attached to anything associated with psychiatric manuals. Those who struggle with mental health issues need strong voices to communicate, hey - look at us, we have value, and we have worth. Powerful role models that can help chip away at the stigma of a marginalized community. A community Western culture may deem unlovable, unworthy of employment, unworthy of a happy fulfilled life, not worth providing adequate care.

In my own town the mentally ill get care by committing petty crimes in order to be locked up in jail where they will have access to meds they so desperately need. What a travesty. Something must shift. Oh my word! That horrid, perfectionist prude in me again! And here I may very well be failing at writing this story - and with that - heck with that attitude - writing brings healing. You have a story? Do you ever struggle with such things Nancy? The pesky internal critic? Mine doesn't surface too often these days, so when it does, I find it particularly annoying.

The condition of MPD, or DID, is usually generated in response to trauma – intense trauma. I am sending on a description of causes I found in the encyclopedia of Mind Disorders I found online with a note that the newest research sees it more as a body/nervous system issues, which in turn relates to the mind. Really, I need to do this, so you'll get who I am and also so that you'll get some of my stories.

“The primary cause of DID appears to be severe and prolonged trauma experienced during childhood. This trauma can be associated with emotional, physical or sexual abuse, or some combination. One theory is that young children, faced with a routine of torture, sexual abuse or neglect, dissociate themselves from their trauma by creating separate identities or personality states. A manufactured alter may suffer while the primary identity “escapes” the unbearable experience. Dissociation, which is easy for a young child to achieve, thus becomes a useful defense. This strategy displaces the suffering onto another identity. Over time, the child, who on average is around six years old at the time of the appearance of the first alter, may create many

more

So, the *host* that I refer to is the part of the system that wasn't aware of the trauma the *alters* housed - ever. The *alters* created are the ones that housed the horror. I am discovering that the terminology defining DID is beginning to shift but stick with this way of identifying my selves for the rest of the story in that it seems to make most sense in the moment.

I was much younger than six when I started to sub-divide, and I liken it to the need of one house to create many, many, many different rooms in order to create the potential to become whole once again. At first the whole psyche starts with living in one house with one room. Then when the boogie man shows up, the first one being my father, you build a room and rewire neurologically so that when the boogie man comes out the experience happens in this particular room, not the original room where the happy go lucky kid in denial grows up and NEVER SEES or is hurt by the boogie man.

In time, if there are more boogie people that show up in your life, or if the type of things you are exposed to becomes even more bizarre, you simple create a new addition to your house and install some pretty creative wiring amongst the rooms for communication or non-communication purposes amongst all of the alters; an underground subterranean family. Some rooms may hold just pure emotions, some rooms may hold just sounds, some just tastes, others images, some rooms may not have communication set up with certain rooms so some of the alters may not be aware of the existence of other *alters*. It is really, really, really complex which is probably why, and to this day complex things come easy to me while simple things simply stump me. For instance, no problem getting an A+ in calculus in college, but figuring out small change for the bus fare? - an entirely different story.

Now that you've a bit of background information I think I can dig a bit deeper into the choreographic assignment of sending you a letter, the first memory to six years, from the perspective of the identity, the *host*, who always lived in the happy house. The *host* was the one with the sugary smile plastered on seven layers thick with that lacquer laced with the ever so necessary drug called denial.

I'd like to start with the violent memories from the perspective of my *host* identity, whom I'll call Anne, and then I'd like to move on to some more lovely things, in that we're just getting to know each other, and I hope to continue creating together, and I don't want to overwhelm you!

Anne housed what I would call normal violence. By normal violence I mean the type of thing I assumed all kids saw and experienced, easy peasy stuff, stuff always in my conscious memory bank, stuff you don't need to dissociate from.

Anne sees Mitch lifted up by his shoulders and thrust against the wall in a hallway in Whittier with great big streams of blood pooling out his nose, angry fists busting through drywall, hot tears streaming down her face as she witnesses her sister forced to eat soap, welts from the belt, her mother with a

bloody nose bashed up by her then alcoholic spouse, she in a violent rage threatening to kill him chasing him with a butcher knife.

There, easy, nothing to it.

Easy peasy normal violent family with my mother at a wits end trying to cope with six kids, a brilliant alcoholic husband she wanted to leave, but had no way out in her view, and she herself with her own set of issues brought on by the skeletons dancing a jig in her own closet.

All children are expressions of love and can't help but love. I really loved my father (he has passed) I love my mother even (I don't know if she is dead or alive.) No parent I think is ever ready for parenting and it is very much a mixed bag for all parents. My father for instance is the one who taught me how to ride a bike. The very bike I crashed into a brick wall. I can remember the moment of letting go and falling, crashing, but I also remember the moment of letting go, and the exhilaration of pedaling and balancing of my own accord.

Interesting that a brick wall should come up in our rehearsal yesterday! Art is funny that way. It brings up images for processing that hold the potential to not only serve as a medium of healing for our own beings, but serve, if you dig deep enough, and are brave enough, to bring healing and inspiration to the audience as well. How? By digging deep and transmuting the personal into the universal.

I think that the encounter in my childhood with the brick wall might have been my first (and last) suicide attempt. I drove my bike directly, and purposefully, right into it! The gash on my forehead required eight stitches. I don't remember with vivid detail exactly what happened so I give myself the creative freedom to conjure up the image of the gentleness of the tall, kindly, Caucasian doctor dressed in white. He wore a trim little goatee – dark with strands of grey, close shaven elsewhere, and his eyes were sparkling green. I saw the goatee just long enough to see his smile before he covered it up with a mask. He also had a very, very, very clean Dr.'s coat. I felt very brave in that moment. There was a trip to the grocery store afterwards, which I remember quite clearly, with time all by myself with my father separate from my siblings. I was rewarded for my good behavior selecting as my reward a Gumby - or was it a pokey - or both. I don't remember but if it was just one, which it probably was given our economic situation, it was probably Pokey; although I am sure it was a Gumby. I settle on Pokey in that this later manifest into a passion for ponies and my relationship with Tinkerbelle.

Tinkerbelle, the stubborn Shetland pony, who took charge one day when I was a novice rider a mile away from the stables. She ran hell bent for home, me with my pigtails bouncing, hostage on a pony with no bit in her wily mouth. I was terrified of the golfers, what they might do, in that she ran on the edge of the green marring up the well-tended turf. But that is later than six years old. I know you'll forgive me for smudging a bit with the choreographic assignment, I keep venturing a bit beyond six!

It was far worse for others I think. Nancy Ulrich and her pack of kids. I don't seem to remember a dad about the house, and the kids were dirtier and poorer, poorer than us, but now that I think about it, we weren't poor in Whittier. Things were much more difficult during the period my father, with his 140 IQ, was unemployed for four years, apparently blackballed for speaking out in such a way that resulted in a discrimination policy being established at his former place of employment. During this period, my mother went back in school to get her sociology degree and graduated from homemaker to social worker. Only a few years ago did I learn why my brothers had access to more food at the table. They bravely went into the night to walk the waterways and dig up golf balls with their bare toes. They brought them home, polished them up, and sold them back to the golfers. They had to run like hell at times! The times the pro saw my brave brothers boldly taking business away from golf ball sales at the village shop. He once eared one brother, and asked him what was in his lumpy white pillow sack. My brother grimaced, spit out "apples, apples in the sack." He broke free from the entitled pro's grip and ran like hell. My brothers' sales helped pay for the victuals, and that is why they got more, which could very well be why I never grew into my feet, not enough sustenance. My feet are a much larger and wider than other women sharing petite & dwarfish statures.

Although I loved the Ulrich's, they weren't my favorite family to hang out with, what with so many family and friends to choose from. I loved the Flannigan's, and also the girl across the street with a piano, and my godmother who lived next door to the infamous low lying brick wall, and even the friend who let me play with her fluorescent haired trolls. There was also the family around the left hand corner with a beautiful silver Weimaraner, and gosh the family we would have to drive a distance to - while the parents talked we'd go play doctor in the bathroom. In this wide circle of friends the Ulrich family was included, and it was in this family that I latched on to my first true love, a boy my own age whose name escapes me.

I can see the location of their home geographically so clearly. You go up the block, which is south, and you go past one street corner where if you look right you can see into my very special memory of a very special Halloween exclamation dolled out by the candy givers LOVING my princess costume "My don't you look like a pretty princess." Right across from that place the girl I loved to play with most because of her wonderful toys, and on this very corner my cat Thomas following me home, and across from Thomas's corner the woman who held séances my mother took me to. Next to her, on the left, two doors down, the family with a tragic death of the son who suffocated while playing in amongst the plastic covering clothes fresh back from the dry cleaners. I cover that memory with the joyful memory of winning pin the tail on the donkey because I could see through the bottom part of my blindfold in the house sandwiched in-between those two homes. In this backyard was a great big tree. I was told it was the type of tree that feeds silk worms and I

loved to imagine these worms spinning silk. If you just keep trotting north to the next corner, turn left and then a sharp left again, there is the house, right up against a culvert, and my first true love inside.

My first true love, he tragically died shortly after I committed my heart to him until death do us part. I distinctly remember the acute heartache and pain when he died, and the abundance of flowers at the funeral. I did not feel sadness for another human's death to that degree every again in that that the subtext of my existence taught me the fine art of numbing. The type of numbing where you pinch your own self as hard as you can and you don't feel a friggin' thing. I certainly didn't feel sad when my father died, but great joy. The happiest day of my life I declared - but I know now, that there were many other scoundrels, and they wanted him to take the blame for it all. The last words I heard from my father were on an answering machine. "A n n e" he said in a long drawled out voice. "I am praying for the destruction of your flesh for the salvation of your soul."

Click - he hung up, just like that. I never heard his voice again.

I found out about my father's death from my niece who found out through her mother who found out through my mother. My mother did not tell a single solitary one of her six children that their father had died. My parents had "gone into hiding" once some of their children began their healing journeys. They kept in touch with the crazies in the family as well as one brother loyal to their cause. My niece said that she heard from my sister that her grandmother, my mother, sat alone in her car while the military service went on, and wept. I am ashamed now that I felt such happiness at news of his death because in the *now* I have so much more understanding, and feel so much sorrow for her life, for my father's life.

After his death I searched obsessively for his obituary, there was none. The other day I searched for him, and I came up with a reference to a grave marker in Sacramento that rends my heart in two. The inscription on his headstone is:

D.W.P.

Date of birth

Date of death

US army

Note: Korea.

In the moment, I let the great washes of sadness flood through my soul having made recent peace with him this past year. I feel sad, that not knowing he was ill, when he reached out to both myself and the other sister estranged from the family - we simply were not well enough, didn't feel safe enough for any sort of connection. How tragic to me that he is away from his homeland in Hawaii and buried away from his ancestors. A part of me fantasizes about

having his bones exhumed and flown home and buried in the same cemetery as his father and brother. Maybe if this came about there would be a gentle hula danced on his grave of compassion and forgiveness.

Oh how I loved my father, especially when he would sing to me in Hawaiian, *Jesus Loves Me This I know*. I loved him for teaching me how to ride a bicycle, I loved him for letting me ride on the back of his bicycle not knowing, realizing, that the weaving was probably due to his intoxicated state. He passes out in the grade school field of grass. I walk myself home but not before I wag back and forth on the plastic animals set up on giant coiled springs, the smell of hot, oh so hot asphalt in the sun.

The same school I would go to kindergarten to with the single memory of the joy of finger-painting, the single memory of the embarrassment of wetting my pants because I confused which finger was for poo and which was for pee and I wet myself. The single memory of my father taking me to the school fair and buying me a gold fish and the wonder of watching this beautiful fish swim about in his clear plastic bag as we trudged towards home. The same school where we would go as a pack of siblings, fighting like cats and dogs, yet loving each other fiercely. As a pack we universally enjoyed the act of giving flight to a kite, us as one, one with the wind in control.

Kites we made ourselves with thin balsa sticks and paper spouting the latest news in a time when the Helms bakery truck still made deliveries, and days of free day old Winchell's donuts. We would rip up old sheets for tails, tying the strips together, and once the kite was done we would trudge to the school and let the string out bit-by-bit flying higher and higher until they were dots in the sky. My brother Frankie had a particular fondness for flying kites and I think maybe he sent his heart up on the string because it seems as if he came away unscathed from it all.

So - that's that, more later, look forwards to your letter Nina!
(there is a heart drawn on the letter here)

M.

He Aloha Ko Iesü

(Jesus Loves Me)

He aloha ko Iesü

I ke keiki liyiliyi nö,

Nonä nö ka po'e liyiliyi

Nona wau ka pökiyi nei.

(chorus) Keiki aloha! Keiki aloha!

Keiki aloha! Ke aloha o Iesü!

He aloha ko Iesü

I ke keiki liyiliyi nö,

Nona nö ka po'e liyiliyi,

P.S. If truth be told, in the letter to Nina, I didn't reveal a single thing about my DID condition. As the host, and the major presenting aspect in public life, I go through phases of being open and honest about my condition with select friends and holding my cards close to my chest. At other times, it is true, I have been in flat out denial about the whole thing, and for good reason, it paces recovery at a tempo that ensures breath continues to course through my body.

So, I've come to the end of this chronicle in my journal of living and very much look forwards to sharing a bit more of my story in the next episode of the *Patchwork Chameleon Chronicles*. We will venture down the rabbit hole by entering first through an out of body experience I had in the birth to six years of age category Nina gave me for the choreographic letter writing assignment. In many ways it set me on my creative path. At least that is how I've read my own tea leaves of the past.

No way in hell I would recount this story to Nina, as a new friend, but I will recount it to you, a total stranger that has somehow come upon my story because I am safely hid behind a playful pen name. But before we go there, as a word of caution to any reader who is toying with the notion of seeking solace through writing, I would like to share in this episode's epilogue just WHAT comes up when one begins to write.

If you like what you have read thus far, and would like to hear more of this tale, you can keep up with the latest and the greatest at www.gingerfreedom.com. If you join *our* mailing list I'll give you a heads up when the next episode is about to be sent into the e-publishing ethers. If you know of others who might draw inspiration from this work kindly share your impressions where you usually give an insightful response to a work that stirs your soul.

Namaste and a Very Happy Day to You!

CHAPTER FOUR: Consequences

My Alters Throw a Coupe

After beginning to send draft chapters out to a few close friends that I trust my system began to de-stabilize and I found myself coming unglued at what I thought were tidy integrated patchwork seams of my colorful psyche. Having been at the process for over two decades I discovered that what works best is to go with the flow of which aspect of my psyche seeks to take primary control to drive the body for the sundry of activities that make up my day to day living. One day, after work I simply could not find the car. While once this had been a common occurrence, losing my car hadn't happened in years. I checked in with my sub-divided self and playfully asked, "o.k., what's up everyone?"

One of my male aspects complained, "you don't use your body enough, you need exercise."

I chuckled, well aint' that the true, and began to walk up and down one street, then another, and fully around various blocks. I walked for 15 or twenty minutes round and round looking for the car, and began to get a bit frustrated, panicked even. I began to imagine walking the 40 minutes home, recruit my beloved to drive me back downtown, and have him drive me around to find the car, which he had done for me before, many moons ago - more than once I am certain.

I went back to my sub-divided self and again I asked, "What is up? I've gotten some exercise in!"

"There is no way we will let you write this story unless you are back in therapy" was the response. I had been out of individual psychotherapy for over a decade checking in from time to time with couples counseling with my beloved when growing through a particularly rough relationship patch.

"Alright, alright, I will go back into therapy" I chuckled back at myself.

"Promise?" they asked firmly and insistently.

"Yes, I promise." I replied patiently.

"Piss on it and promise?" they queried again - with seriousness in tone I found disconcerting.

"Yes, piss on it and promise!" I ventured back.

This sealed the deal and bingo, I had a sudden image of where the car was, the Tiffani aspect of myself had parked in a place I rarely park while out on lunch break doing some errands. She loves to shop, so when we shop, if she wants to, I let her drive the body and as the co-conscious host, do the math of whether or not we can afford the purchase or not. Sometimes I just let go and don't worry about the finances because it feels more liberating to not worry. To date this relationship has never resulted in us not being able to pay off our credit card at the end of the month. Well, that's not actually true, we weren't aware we had an insurance payment coming up and spent beyond our budget on this last season's holiday expenditures. We had to borrow a bit from our beloved until our next little windfall came in - getting paid out our sick time at the end of the year.

There was something about returning to this book project that signaled to my inner selves, a great big olly olly oxen free, come out, come out wherever you are, the host is ready to process the next layer of trauma. The layer I as the host always suspected might be there, but never dove into because we used sheer will power to bring the recovery process to a screeching halt using meds, lots of it at first, to stave the flow. I also had the sense, that maybe there was a threshold of knowledge that might be too much for me, that might send me over one of the two edges I took great pride in not launching over - suicide or amputate my wings and build a cuckoo nest.

I myself didn't have the ability to find the therapist in that the writing process unleashed what is called a florid decompensation with my body overwhelmed by PTSD symptoms. I was back to the very same place I had been many years ago of being confronted with bone blanching abject terror. While I had dealt with the matter neatly the first time around by avoiding what was behind it by spiraling into a psychotic break, I made the decision that the only way out was through, and held on using every healing tool at my disposal, expressing a willingness to my psyche to process what was behind the terror. The terror lasted for three solid weeks with my blood pressure spiking upward. I returned to the use of the med I knew would stave off stress-induced psychosis and kept in close touch with my GP as well as my psychiatrist.

I set out to get my butt back in therapy. No easy task - somehow the system knew we needed to find an expert. The first therapist came highly recommended. She began with asking me to tell a bit about myself, a bit about my story, and 15 minutes into the chat she handed me back my check and said, sorry, I can't help you and didn't know of anyone who could. She suggested finding a somatic therapist. At this point I as the *host* took a much needed break from the task of managing our complex life and Dymond, a strong male aspect that feels about 10 years old took charge. He presents as super capable and has a gender identity mismatch with the body admitting that

because he does not want to have sex with girls, but loves our beloved, who is a boy, that he must be a gay male. I can feel him inside livid that I would share such an intimate detail, but, well, he has not been saying such kind things about me these days either. I can hear him chuckling inside saying “yup - she is so right.” We give each other permission to complain about respective states of consciousness and pray for internal peace. He to the G-d he believes in and me as the agnostic, well, I suppose prayer happens as I watch my breath in meditation.

Dymond succeeded, we are back in therapy, and I return to the writing process. Dymond, as I write in the *now*, remains in control much of the time and with this comes some very large changes in life. He's decided the body needs one day off a week, and has cancelled Sunday rehearsals so we have Sundays off; he has decided I abuse alcohol and talked to our GP about this so we are now keeping a journal of how much wine we are drinking following the doctor's orders of no more than two glasses of wine a night; he rejoined the gym and has us at the pool on our lunch hour which is actually the hour the girls get to drive the body; he signed up for a social networking site and made friends that the system trusts that know of our DID; and also joined an online support group. He also discussed with the GP his aggravation about the psychiatrist, his unwillingness to read about our condition or address the alcohol abuse, and his take that we have the wrong diagnosis. Dymond even met with the psychiatrist twice the second time confiding about his perplexity over how he is in a female body, but definitely identifies as a male. He was wearing pink that day in an attempt to feel more like a girl, which didn't help one bit, unless he reached out and tried to feel the edges of the female alters still very much their own tribe.

I am grateful for Dymond, really, and in the *now* I acknowledge he is the healthier expression in the bunch. When he isn't around, well, I admit, I went over our 2 glasses a night quota and poured my third and while writing this am ready to launch towards the $\frac{3}{4}$ bottle level of red wine and hell- after a particularly wretched therapy session I drank a whole bottle. I am particularly grateful that he has the sense to seek support and found us an online support community where others understand the challenges. It is so satisfying, and validating to discover others struggle with similar struggles. For certain - I don't feel so alone. I just wouldn't be able to share this sort of thing with just anyone.

This Evening's Online Journal Entry Some Day in April

Greggory was out at the dinner table tonight and to think 18 years ago he had no language and would smash food on my face at the dinner table: my beloved said back then - I don't like you! Now he is more civilized, still doesn't have much language, but is learning to relax his body. He was even able to listen to the very complex subjects my beloved was talking about. I as the host sent love to Greggory and thanked him for the dastardly deeds he

carried out for sake of survival that I never had to see.

Today Dymond tried out a bit of what Tiffany the very female female felt like and welcomed it a bit and Tiffany in turn, when Dymond got home and put on his usual comfortable boyish stuff was willing to give him a try. Maybe this is a step towards real integration. Not something forced by circumstance. One doctor the family took me to insist I stop my shenanigans at once, that DID doesn't exist, to just get over it, a factor that put further stress on my relationship. My beloved and I separated for almost a year and I was forced to halt the recovery process and hobble together some sense of moving forwards in an integrated fashion with way too many meds dampening life.

So here we are, in the now, completely and totally unglued. My present therapist says we ought aim for co-consciousness and that seems like a very good goal. My relationship with my psychiatrist has greatly improved. This is only because my alters feel safe enough to discuss their concerns, an act that has taken fifteen years, to come to that place of trust. The same holds true for my GP. So onward ho - forwards in life, and forwards with the story. While I began this portion from a place of relative stability, I begin shaping the next section managing flashbacks several times a week, processing some very disturbing new information. I have had moments where I have felt as if I am fighting for my life and am not sure if what I am experiencing is reliving *trauma time*, triggers deliberately set of in the flow of day to day living, or a combination of both - most likely, a combination of both. The amnesia barriers are lifting and we venture into taboo portions of our subconscious where we are beginning to match faces and names and persons with atrocities.

While I would never have courage to ask directly, Dymond did. He wrote to my sister who has been undergoing her own healing journey who we contact infrequently and posed a direct question about my father. There had been a recent realization that one aspect of the psyche was created for sex in the shower with my father, and the memory that he would use a tie to asphyxiate her.

Her response was - yes, every aspect and every detail, she had processed. She's become my coach really, a younger sister so much older and so much wiser in so many ways, and advises not probing into anything that doesn't come up organically, or unless the practitioner advises. She has 13 years of somatic healing under her belt and is glad I finally pursued this avenue for support. While it had been my wildest hope that the trauma I experienced was a figment of my imagination I must now own that it is not. I got what I asked for, a revelation of truth, which I'll share with you in the next Chronicle.

I take a bright shiny nail and nail down denial.

I had a dream last night of a corpse by the roadside.

In looking up what that might mean in a dream dictionary what makes

most sense is that some aspect of me has died.

Can she be revived?

Will I survive?

This patch is particularly rough and I am at a wits end with it all.

In my toughest hours I am inspired by a wisp of a great wit of a compassionate being and the title of her own memoirs - the Wit to Win.

Like a mantra - I tell myself, I have it, I have the wit to win, and I will win and add a line borrowed from my dear father n un-law laughing happily in his afterlife "Don't let the bastards get you down."

Kharma Krackers

Episode two in the Patchwork Chameleon
Chronicles



Kharma Krackers

Low in Sodium

High in Art

Trauma, DID, PTSD

**Harnessing The Artist's Lifework as a
Medium for Change**

Ginger Freedom

**EPISODE TWO OF THE
PATCHWORK CHAMELEON
CHRONICLES**

DEDICATION

Book two in this series is dedicated to the same person episode one was dedicated to - the love of my life, my beloved Koutoukie, who has seen me through thick and thin, loves me unconditionally forever and always, and is truly my knight in shining armor. A very special thanks to my postal carrier Charles, who reads draft chapters for me, and sends them back marked up a bit with a red pen.

Perpetual thanks to Mother Nature for supporting my process and keeping me safe & Magnolia the Magnificent Pussy Cat. Great hugs of gratitude - Love you so!



Life drawing by Dylan

Chapter One: The Dominos Hold a Séance

Cast Out From Eden

She stood with her back to the door she had just ventured through, Anne did, a great big oak door, living and alive, connected in heart and soul to the oldest coast live oak gracing the planet she was to visit for the very first time. She stared out over the expanse of her future in an accordion fold of overlapping time. As an old soul, having lived many incarnations in other galaxies, she had committed to the journey of giving it a shot, an adventure on earth as a part of the human family. Anne had heard stories of what an awkward planet it was, and having had lived so many lifetimes in balanced grace, she was up for something altogether new. Anne claims she was not given much detail prior to saying, "yes, I'll manage that, and manage it quite nicely." My guess is that she was provided the details of the quest and she had been too lost in experience savoring the goodness of her many other lives than to be fully present at the briefing of her next adventure. A trait she seemed to carry forward from one life to the next. Something she could never escape from. The moment she walked through the doorway, a powerful blast of energy, a non descript non directional gust quite purposefully swung the door swiftly closed: she was not giving a tick of time to assess the lay of the land before her. There was a reverberating boom, sheer terror filled the cracks of all of the lives she'd ever felt, touched, lived and known intimately. Fear was a new dynamic for Anne that thrilled and repulsed her all in one wave of overwhelming emotion.

Her life to come flashed before her, and her sweet pure soul shuddered in horror. Quicker than a weasel after a rat she flipped and turned to face the door.

"Not fair you bastard!

You didn't tell me I would have to live through that!"

She began to pound on the old door hollering "let me in, let me in, I want to go home, I can't do this."

She began to screech like a barn own and claw madly like a rabid skunk at the old oak who patiently withstood the barrage, bleeding little bits of crimson salty tears, empathizing over her fate.

When that tactic failed, she switched approaches, and she began to rap gently, and respectfully on the old oak, stroking even, gentle kisses, pleading, "please, I've changed my mind, open the door, let me back in to the safety and comfort of my sister soul tribe. I can't do this."

A deep, booming, masculine voice resonated through the oak.

"You can and will do this. I trust you, and I trust you with this mission."

Anne turned to face her mission, her back against the old oak, and pressed her full weight against it. "You fucking bastard you" she muttered. She slithered down millimeter by millimeter numb to the sensation of

splinters and scrapes. She slowly slid down until her ghostly soul rump rest on the doors' mantle. She sat there and curled into a clump and wept for each loss to come in that she knew, in this life, there would be no time for grieving - none whatsoever. When she'd wept the last tear allotted for this venture in life she squirmed up straight, and waited, blanched whiter than the usual soul white, along with those waiting to venture forth into their next incarnation. Each waited on their respective ledges viewing what lay ahead of them. A jump-start and a chance to think through how to navigate through the rough patches.

She peered out over the edge into the present, she could see her parents rutting with great passion and pleasure; and with the final sigh of released orgasm, she felt a tug that manifest a lifeline. Her spirit began to descend and took root in the womb of a multiple locked into the cycle of horror perpetuating horror. For as long as she could Anne kept touch with her heavenly sister souls, they each having also embarked on their soul journeys, and womb to womb they reached out and touched each other. One destined for great fame and fortune, another to destitute poverty, and another yet to a banal, boring, unfulfilled life of a battered homemaker. They chatted amongst each other, womb-to-womb, about how they hadn't bargained for this deal, and that when they were finished with this round, they'd venture to a different galaxy and test out a different deity forgoing masculine dominance of a dominion.

"Not bad" thought Anne, "for a start of a story", and she shoved it aside with a great big sigh. "Too obvious though" she thought, and she back to the drudgery of the healing process and the task at hand. To use narrative to integrate her life, and to continue on with the process of writing her memoir keeping that anal promise she made to herself, that if she ever got to the other side of hell, she'd write about it, in hopes that the creation would soothe the souls of others with kindred trauma templates.

It was surprisingly simple to publish the first episode in the series, and surprisingly inexpensive. She invested a whopping \$6 bucks at the local copy shop printing out the final draft to proof in that she thought it kinder to her aging printer to outsource the task. Anne had an affinity for inanimate objects dating back as far as she could remember. For years and years her heart would stretch out with great affection for her "heater friend" who came to life during the winter months. A friend that not only delivered the gift of warmth, but the soothing sound of its mechanical voice, a hum, a purr, a reverberation that evoked calm in her often troubled being. So, she did the printer she was fond of a kindness, and outsourced the task. Objects were safe to love, and they were trustworthy; so unlike the human species she had come to find out.

She put her head in her hands tuning into what was going on in her body. She had carved out time for healing and was aware that a body memory was coming on. Rather than give in, she shoved it under, and chose a healthy coping mechanism - busyness, then went for an unhealthy coping mechanism,

a glass of wine, and then a second. Although the story was too close for home in the moment she could administrate and set at the task of grant writing for the arts collective, as this was something she could do after two glasses of wine. She wondered if the young artists who had recently joined the group were aware of the gift they were receiving by joining up with what she and her beloved had built over the past twenty years. As she crunched through the numbers for the last fiscal year's financials, she reflected on their first year and thought, my how we have grown! When she had started out there was no one to show her the ropes with regard to how to create, build, and run a dance company. She launched her endeavor at a time when choreographers held their cards close to their chest not apt to share information. If anything, they would provide dis-information making the job more challenging. The sting of competition had faded in recent years. Although she still did not earn anything as a creative, things had shifted. It was no longer the case that 100% of the cost of creating and disseminating work came solely out of her personal meager pocket. Others had surfaced believing in her, her work, and gave to support the vision, and ultimately, her healing journey.

She would never forget that one day, after a performance, her first angel patron approached her with a wide smile on his face. He pressed a piece of paper in her hand. When she opened it, there was a check for \$5,000 made out to the dance company's non-profit. With the patronage came a bold and playful spirit that she attributed to the stunning success (by her simple measures) of their boutique company in recent years.

Gratitude, oh so profoundly grateful, and what they managed to do with their shadow of a shoestring budget not only getting their own work out into the world but helping hundreds of other artists working at shifting the paradigm in how the arts organize.

Rather than perpetuating the pyramid, hierarchical, elitist model, they had taken a more collaborative and co-creative approach to the work operating from a premise of abundance rather than scarcity and fear - an opportune and very ripe chance to celebrate the working class artist, the 99%, the boutique companies and collectives.

The grant writing this season held the potential to take the company to a completely new level with one of the projects accepted at a national performing arts center in the homeland of her mother's parents. The performance would occur in a fragment of former Yugoslavia, an honor their Slovenian collaborator likened to an American company being invited to perform at the Lincoln Center in New York. "Me? Is this really me? My life?" Anne asks herself.

Anne also reflected on who she was in *the now*. After 22 some years of processing the trauma drama of it all she had finally come to terms with her condition as middle-aged woman who had survived some hellacious things by developing a dissociative identity disorder. On the flight home from a whirlwind trip to perform in the Bronx at the Brooklyn Academy of the Arts

and Dance (BAAD), a trip that was managed by the Dylan aspect of her being, Dylan had been brave enough to take the tests in Marlene Steinberg's book *The Stranger in the Mirror*. He had even been bold enough to discuss his condition with complete strangers he sat next to during his flights and while waiting in the airport. Steinberg's tests rate where one stands in relation to the five core symptoms of dissociation: amnesia, depersonalization, derealization, identity confusion, and identity alteration.

Anne, co-conscious with Dylan, responded with "Shit - still, after all this work, rating moderate on some, severe with others - I'm still pretty fucked up. I feel like I am back where I started managing flashbacks as I dive into a deeper layer of healing. But you know what? To spite my neurological wiring I have the capacity to be a kind, empathetic, compassionate and loving being and I am manifesting my life work doing what I love to do. If it is anything, it is a blessing. I've figured it out - and that is what really matters, living the dream, to spite the really shitty hand I was dealt in life that has NOTHING to do with karma - shit just happens. So what, I am a multiple, I am somewhat of a freak and have to share time with these other aspects of me and no longer dance 24/7, but have to give up time for romper room, the visual artist, the singer. How in the hell did I get here?"

Anne mentally tracks the past, what she has written already, and fingers the dominos she has yet to lay out for her readers. All of two have signed up for her e-newsletter announcing the next book. Numbers at this point do not matter, she would take the same care if just one person signed up, and she would take even greater care if none had signed up. Her fingers drum the black marble of her desk and an internal struggle ensues as her many selves bicker over which domino to put in place next. She shoves the whole task aside with one fell swoop and dives into a book she borrowed from the neighborhood lending library up the street that houses neighbor's favorite reads. A cute oak bookcase colored maple with glass doors that protect the books somewhat from the elements. After devouring the book whole she shakes her head in disgust wondering why one even bothers with the writing process unless they possess great skill in weaving magic such as this book. Comfortable although not the best of friends with her internal critic Anne pauses to give that texture of her make-up a patronizing pat on the head saying, "there there now - you have your views and I have mine." Anne acknowledges that she is depressed, and knows, in a depressed state, it is difficult to manage much of anything but manage she must and instinctively slams the *out of body* experience domino on the table and lines it up next to the others she lined up in the first episode of her writing journey, and recounts the tale.

Her leg begins to jounce up and down a bit. She rattles the rest of the dominos as if they are knucklebones in her mental handbag of writing notes, visions, images, and ideas. Anne recounts the experience in the first person in that this is a memory she does not feel she needs to distance herself from, or

mask in metaphor, or even go further and tweak it to the degree that it would become fiction. She just tells it as it is.

Out of Body Experience

I had the flashback of this experience when in my mid 30s, in the living room of my beloved. The flashback was as powerful as if I was experiencing it all over again. My beloved called me out of the experience in that it terrified him. I used sheer will power to stop the flood of images. From his perspective, he indicated that it felt as if he was witnessing something an Old Testament prophet might have experienced. I admit I am embarrassed by the memory and look to science for an explanation with a recent bit of research indicating that certain parts of the brain light up for those having an out of body experience. I as the host have shed my ultra right wing charismatic Christian ways, am a backslid agnostic, and a mystic that values spirituality. My present explorations include working at creating a mindfulness practice and doing the gnitty gritty work of dissecting my diversified belief systems and working at shedding those that no longer serve me well which is a shrewd and selfish act of survival in interest of being socially responsible about my mental health condition.

The aspect of me that believes in God, and in fact, lay underneath our bed asking God for help and guidance just the other night, might say that is because the pathways to other dimensions are inside of us. We are energy, and one can ride the energy to connect with these places, and as long as the body is alive, this energetic connection will show up, and yes it is possible to be in more than one time/place/space at one time. Once the pathway is established, why, when we exhale our last breath, there we are, we go to heaven, or purgatory, or hell, or Disneyland, or back to the beginning - wherever our own heart desires. Kinda sorta makes sense - yes, I suppose the Queendom of the Divine may in part be something we drop into through our physical being with our bodies being temples of great wonder, mystery, and magic.

The time of day, I see and know so clearly. It is dim, very dim, and it is just before dawn. I see my body below me; crumpled up on the floor of my parent's bedroom. I do not see my parents. In my imagination, I make them go away. I do not want to see what is happening, I do not want to know why I am leaving my body as I write this remembrance, so I choose to not see, not know - although some aspect of me undoubtedly does. Some alter, some splinter, some aspect - but nobody has fessed up yet, or perhaps they have, and the information is wrapped up tighter than a titmouse in the desert of denial where I do not have to deal with it. In the moment of recounting this experience, I am in the midst of processing newly surfaced information about my relationship with my father, and slow things down a bit. Yes, I have nailed a shiny new nail deep down into the heart of denial, but I wrench it out with my boa constrictor tight jaws clamping tight, squeezing, ripping and wrenching to pull it loose. I realize I still need it now and then, as a resource

to cope.

I float to the bedroom where I sleep with my two sisters, I see the bed Natalie usually sleeps in, but in the bed, I see Shelly. There is a form hovering over her sleeping body and the form is translucent, see-through, and I can make the outline of the form out because of a set of colors that reminds me of the dance one sees on a soap bubble blown by kids at the seaside. It reads as predominantly gold with every color imaginable undulating on the surface. The color continues to move about as the bubble floats through space. The colors also remind me of what one sees when a camera lens refracts light bursting into shards and streams of many colors of light. I am not describing it very well because I cannot seem to find words in the English language apt enough to describe the memory. Truth be told I don't remember wings. I left the angel blessing my sister's head, her mind perhaps, and I float back to my parent's bedroom.

Suddenly I can see a vortex of energy; it is both in the room and stretches above the room. It is bell shaped with the narrower part above the house and the wider shape, which seems around a body's length in diameter, is within the house. The overall shape of the vortex is that of a figure. How can I see both inside the house and outside of the house? I feel myself sucked towards it. In describing the quality of the field, the closest image that comes to mind is imagining what it would be like if an amethyst crystal were translated into energy rather than a solid substance one can hold in the palm of their hand. It seemed as if the energy had edges to it just as a crystal does. I then have a sensation of walking into this space upright then falling on a horizontal plane, spread eagle, and falling into the field, not up, not down, but within, and I spin in this spread eagle shape. As I begin to approach another time/space dimension, I am upright again and the bottom of another world opens up. Children a little younger than me reach down to help me up. They are laughing and overjoyed. The joy is so complete. I feel the joy enter my being. At the time I am reliving the experience I liken the experience to spiritual orgasm of ecstasy. These children are so, so, so happy.

The experiences that came after I cannot piece together in a linear fashion but will share them in the way they organize themselves in *the now*. There was one figure dressed in a soft white tunic and the fabric seemed most similar to woven linen. We communicated, but I do not remember how we communicated, nor what information passed between us. The entity was warm, friendly, kind, and I want to project on it the energy of what we associate with ascended spiritual masters. One aspect of me likens him to Christ. Another part of me does not associate it with either a male or female gender, and for lack of a better description, has a more alien experience - as if seeing something never encountered before. The gaze of this entity goes towards a city that is shrouded in gases that looks like a heat wave undulating. The gases have substance to it as if they were clouds, but not so much clouds, in that I associate clouds with sky, and I don't remember sky in this particular

space. I followed his gaze and see the city is on a hill, or mountain even, and the uppermost buildings have round domes with spires on top. I do not remember the colors, yes I do, and they were swirls of blue with yellow, bits of gold, like the magic of blown glass.

The next image that surfaces from this experience is of something I had never seen before and I coin it a squat and powerful Buddha lion. It had eyes with fire inside. It felt as if the fires were a sort of wrath at injustice that empathized with those who suffered, as if there is a keeper, or guardian in the universe that gets royally pissed when something unjust occurs. A collar extended up from the back of its shoulders. Out from the space between the collar and the shoulder girdle emanated great big beams of light emitting a tone. I want to describe the tone in *the now* as the song of a beautiful gem, such as a ruby or emerald. I seem to remember wings on the Buddha lion with claws on its feet that were the color of rubies. The coloring of the sculpture was tawny - like a lion, but I do not remember the texture of it. I am not quite sure if I have the color tawny correct - in *the now* I want to make the creature tawny like the lion Aslan, so I do, for comforts sake, in that I so loved this character in the Chronicles of Narnia.

The next view that surfaces is the figure taking me to a tunnel that contained souls that were milky looking. The natures of the souls were such that each was complete, whole, pure, and so, so sweet - succulent even. I felt a sensation associated with their sweetness. I don't know if you have ever eaten anything that is so delicate and delicious that it causes a particular part at the sides of the back of the tongue to be activated. So much so that one finds oneself groaning over the deliciousness of it all. I had this reaction once when eating fine French cuisine at my Jr. Prom in High School. At any rate, I somehow was given an understanding of how sweet and pure the human soul is. I suddenly realized that no matter how misguided a human might become, nothing can tamper with the essence of this core - even if they became conduits of evil while on earth - nothing can destroy this core. In that moment empathy and compassion ignited in me. Perhaps this is why forgiveness of others has come so easily. Not so much forgiveness of me, but of others who have harmed me, I might feel anger and rage, but can feel compassion, empathy, and forgiveness flow as easily as hot syrup over buckwheat pancakes.

The next image within this memory is of being in a room that has a floor comprised of what looked like the top of giant pearls with amber colored gas swirling in the spaces in between. There was a room of elders in the room, and I want to say that their essence felt masculine, but I cannot be sure. I can't tell you what they looked like, or what they were wearing, they didn't seem to resemble humans truth be told - it seemed as if they might even be from a different galaxy. I feel no fear so I assume the forms are benevolent. I find myself next within a table that is not made of matter, but vacant space, rectangular, with distinct edges to this field of space. It felt solid once I was

inside the table. I began to see the infinite expanse of the universe. It was beyond words - glorious - and I was given a sense that I was interconnected to this total state, that this state is my identity, a part of this great big expanse of beauty - I dropped into infinite awe.

The last image associated with this vision was of scrolls of parchment that had hieroglyphics, shapes, and symbols I didn't recognize. What feels most true is that they were ancient. The elders discussed their concerns for planet earth, and discussed peace plans, but I really do not know what the plans contained. One figure chose two scrolls, more like maps I would say, and rolled them up. I reached out my arms. The scrolls entered my being through my palms, and I sensed something traveling up my arms settling into my heart space. I had a sense at that time that that is how healers heal. A great big gush of love that comes from the heart center, travels through the arms then out through one's palms. My beloved called me out of the experience before it was complete: my whole body vibrating and shaking as if plugged into a very powerful energy source - so I did, just like that, stopped the recollection. It is this experience as a child that set in motion part of my life calling: a passion for the arts, a passion for peacemaking, and beginning with working on peace within.

Anne skims what she has written, settles into a rare moment of satisfaction, and coos to the cat in her lap, "that captures the experience well enough Magnolia don't you think?" Anne pauses to consider the drawings that have subsequently flowed through her. She reflects how, now and again, images of guardian angels, and sometimes a Christ like figure seem to surface repeatedly. Images she doesn't make out until the fury of the creative process is spent. She marvels at the storytelling nature of the creative process. For years her thought was, the art tells the story, I'll never need to tell it straight. Anne also marvels at the wonder of valuing inter-personal growth, how rich her life seems because she is open to going with the flow of shedding precepts when they no longer seem to serve spiritual growth, and in *the now* she finds herself telling it straight - although she calculates, that for some of the story, she may need to cloak it in the guise of fiction, fantasy, or horror even.

Anne jiggles her bag of dominos, reaches in, and pulls out the next one that contains the story of hearkening to the call of the creative. She slams it on the table and a hairline fracture surfaces. She sets the domino upright and floats outside of herself, distancing herself a bit from the story, and recounts the tale in the third person.

The Creative Call

Anne made the decision to heed the call the day she was going through graduation ceremonies with a degree in business economics, one class short of fulfilling all of her requirements, a blue and gold braid perched and pinned smartly atop her right shoulder setting her graduation gown apart from so many of the others in the sea of blue and gold about her. To spite it being the

dry season the gradation lawn was squishy, wet, and delightfully spongy beneath her feet. The day was temperate and mild without a cloud in the sky. Anne saw her parents in the crowd, which surprised her. Her mother looked supremely pissed, perhaps because through sheer determination her daughter had succeeded in earning a degree in business economics without one cent of support from her or her husband. They made it abundantly clear when she was in high school that with six kids, each of them were on their own with regard to a college education, and her daughter opted to first pursue a career as a waitress before returning to college later in life. Her daughter had managed the venture through scholarships, a Pell grant, and working several jobs pacing her education to manage her life struggles and peculiar learning style.

Anne was not only graduating, but she was graduating Lambda Phi Beta Kappa, with a 3.9 GPA earning highest honors. Floating outside of Anne, knowing what we as her system know now, I'd say she suffered from ADD as well as dyslexia, and floated through life highly dissociated sitting upon a ticking PTSD time bomb of a series of life experiences she had no idea existed. Anne's intent was to follow through with pursuit of a doctorate in economics with a focus on cultural economics with Stanford being the choice of schools. She'd given up her dream of pursuing creative endeavors long, long ago.

Learning for Anne had always been, well, interesting. As Anne brushed off the angry look from her mother, and slowly moved down the graduation aisle, she took stock of the sea of graduates and was shocked to see there were only a spattering of students wearing the distinctive blue and gold braid and she flushed from a wicked surge of embarrassment.

A voice inside began to prompt, "You are not done yet."

"What do you mean? Of course I am so done. I am off to get a PhD in economics next."

"uhn, uhn, no you're not"

Anne ignored the voice and inched forwards, her learning style, and memory of it, well, she knew it was only sheer determination that enabled her to achieve what she had achieved and she did have reservations about being able to manage her uniqueness at a graduate level.

When in conversations with people, Anne didn't hold the capacity to process more than a word or two, or a sentence here and there, with her attention to what was being said flitting in and out as carefree as a wisp of a butterfly dancing from one wildflower to the next. To spite this inability to focus she pieced together meaning from what she heard and managed to carry on conversations. In college she began to sense that others didn't process conversations in this way. Anne also wasn't aware that she had dyslexia, but

just noted that in her dance classes, if the teacher raised their right hand, she would raise her left. If the instructor stepped left first Anne stepped right. With regard to remembering longer sequences of movement - utterly impossible. She playfully problem solved for this at the ballet barre cajoling her best friend, Jen, who was also an economics major, to always situate herself so that Anne could stand behind her. After a combination was completed with the right hand on the barre the two would swiftly rearrange themselves when it was time to do the combination with the left hand on the barre. In this fashion Anne could easily mimic what was happening in the moment. For group sequences away from the barre Anne always stood in the back. She learned to latch on to the group energy to be carried along by those who were adept at picking up the dance combinations rapidly. Albeit, Anne was always a half pulse behind, but in her own way, her body began to learn to dance. Something about movement, and seeking alignment and harmony in my body began to cause things to shift in her consciousness. When overwhelming emotions surfaced Anne quietly excused her self, and then would run outside to scream into a sweatshirt. The ballet teacher, Ms. Hubbard always swore to Anne, you'll never get cancer getting it out like that, and went as far as to create a stretch at the barre where all the students would bend over in first position in a forward fold, twist their spines and get in a good counter stretch by reaching upwards. Ms. Hubbard directed the class to emit jungle sounds with monkey screeches and reaching for imaginary bananas being a class favorite.

It was impossible for Anne to read textbooks and retain information by simply reading. She learned that if she wrote out longhand what she was reading, verbatim, word for word, and equation for equation, she could begin to grasp what was being expressed. On the second read she'd highlight bits here and there and by the fourth read of the same chapter, understanding would settle in. She'd then begin to distill the chapters into simpler thoughts and then further distill the thought by drawing colored symbols and lines organizing ideas. For equations Anne worked with her magic number ten. She would write the equation out long hand, ten times, and found she could remember it well enough to be able to begin to work with it in problem solving.

To spite Anne's peculiar learning style, she presented as a good student. Anne attributed this mostly to her tenacity, grit, perseverance as well as her insatiable thirst for knowledge and understanding. In addition to assigned texts, Anne sought out additional books on topics in an effort to satiate her curiosity and gain a deeper understanding of the material. When she began to find errors in her economics texts, and pester her professors about how an answer key was giving the wrong answer to a problem, one of her professors suggested she began to tutor economics and help other students, which she did. Someone in the school wrote on Anne's behalf to Stanford University. She received a letter from the college telling her someone had written on her

behalf indicating she was exceptionally well qualified for graduate work. Stanford encouraged her to apply indicating there was funding available to help her in such a pursuit, and that was what Anne intended to do, after she finished that one last class.

The voice comes again, "You're not done yet."

Anne is about halfway to the podium, and it is beginning to grow hot. Anne is suddenly aware of flies buzzing about seeking sweat and lifts her hand to ungraciously swat at the bother. She growls under her breath "I am done." At the same time she begins to soften, and to consider the commentary.

Anne traced backwards, considering her other experiences with learning. In high school she couldn't recall EVER doing homework - she must have done it. She remembered little of what transpired in the classes themselves unless they related to the arts. She remembered the mischief of her love hate relationship with her art teacher who fawned all over her younger sister and her beyond belief genius gift merely tolerated her own painting efforts. At least that was her take on the situation, which more than likely, wasn't entirely accurate. She rewarded him with mischievous pranks, such as the day she spiked his thermos of Constant Comment tea with 1/2 a bottle of lemon extract, and getting the entire class to howl with laughter the day he mistakenly took a drink from the cat food tin that held her rinse water rather than his tea. She'd slyly swapped the location of his teacup with the tin.

She would, when she ventured to take classes from him in junior college, be greatly discouraged by his proclamation that she had no talent whatsoever and would never make it in the field of the arts - design, maybe - but never the visual arts. Anne was just wired differently, and it took a special person I think to see that. Mr. Zaharias, her old school charming middle-aged Greek Trigonometry teacher, was one such teacher. With an ever-present twinkle in his eye, and a beguiling thick Greek accent, he poured encouragement into her being where her art teacher had poured animosity and spite. One day he gave Anne a class exam back with the comment, "well, you didn't solve the problem the way I illustrated in class how the problem should be solved, but you invented your own way, and came up with the right answer, so I gave you full credit."

The voice comes yet again jarring Anne from her thoughts.

"You aren't done yet."

This time she replies. "What do you mean? I'm not done yet, of course I am, I am through with this school and I am ready for graduate work." Anne makes the wise choice to soften further, and asks her heart, "Am I done? What else is there?" She knows this voice, and it has never led her astray, if

anything, it has kept her out of a lot of trouble. Anne journeys even farther back in her memory acknowledging she has even less recollection of what went on in kindergarten, or the first few grades of primary school for that matter.

In kindergarten, there was the memory of the ecstasy derived from finger painting and memory of arriving to school at the wrong time and trudging home hot from the flush of that very same wicked embarrassment. In the 1st grade, there was Anne's bafflement about how her ABCs had flown out her mental window. She knew she had learned them, and hummed the tune, but for the life of her, she couldn't remember, so she set out once again to learn her ABCs. Simple things stumped Anne, and her ability to remember what the teacher told her so difficult. Anyone could remember which finger was for poo and which was for pee, but not Anne. So, when the teacher read the signal for number two as poo, when Anne thought she was signaling one for pee, and couldn't wait, the teacher thinking Anne could, didn't dismiss Anne and she consequently wet herself. She sat there through the rest of class horribly ashamed with wet panties and a very wet dress. Anne's mind fingers the single second grade memory, at St. Bruno's in Whittier. Of the habited nun blowing her tuning pipe and performing for the very first time - ever. Dressed in a ridiculously cute cardboard teapot painted light blue Anne sang, "I'm a little teapot, short and stout, here is my handle, here is my spout. When you tip me over ..." With the tipping over part she arcs over sideways pouring her stream of imaginary hot tea into a very large cardboard cup. Anne remembers her first communion, and lunchtime of burgers, but she has no memory of attending catechism classes - she **MUST** have attended catechism classes to be able to receive her first communion.

Anne is 3/4 of the way to the podium where she will shake the hand of the guest speaker, a politician with eyes on the presidency, and the voice comes again.

"Anne"

"Yes? I know, there is something, I'm listening, I'm willing to consider I may not be done yet, as much as I would like to be."

Anne commits in the moment to figuring it out - what it is that she hasn't finished.

The image of her mother comes to the forefront of her mind, she sees her seething and spitting, she wasn't angry all of the time, and in fact, there were moments of great kindness, like the birthday cake she adorned for her with a pink sugared ballerina. Time stands still, it gets stuck in a little fold, and Anne can feel the pulse of her lifework, the memory, the draw of it. It is years ago,

her mother hands her a lovely cream-colored shirt, a soft and supple rayon from Paris, and she gives it to her with words that sting. "I am giving you a shirt from Paris because you'll never go." Anne is 18 again, and she is making use of a present from her mother, mime lessons as a graduation present. She connects strongly with the group, although they all seem so much older, in their later twenties, thirties, and forties even. Anne begins to talk out loud, but time has stood still in an eave, and no one seems to hear her.

"I'll never forget the troupe's leader doing a short skit in class in a drab overcoat with nothing on underneath and the intrigue of his long penis wagging, and the shock of his hairy nuts hanging low. I will also never forget the time he took us all sailing on his sailboat that leaked like a sieve mourning the loss of the chocolate chip cookies someone had baked that fell off the galley counter. As I helped to scoop out water from the boat I bemoaned the cookies floating like soggy islands in the ankle deep salt water in the narrow galley. I snatched at one soggy mess and ventured a desperate taste spitting out the nibble as soon as the flavor hit my tongue full force. I kept up with my mime studies and the next summer we had enough material created to share our various sketches in open spaces outside. Sunday morning I was scheduled to perform with the troupe for a group of developmentally disabled kids at Oak Park. I had always felt an affinity and intrigue in relation to what we then called the "retarded" community. Perhaps because I was somehow aware of my own ticking time bomb in the depths of my unconscious being with my own cast of funky characters waiting silently for the right time to surface and make me conscious. Some actually, which present as "retarded." I was about to leave the house for the performance when my mother stopped me and laid down a cold ultimatum. You can't go to this performance; you have to go to church. I pleaded with her countering I would gladly go in the evening. She would have nothing of it. I learned from an early age that living under my parents roof meant living by their rules, and when she said, if you go to this performance, and miss church this morning, don't come back, I was stunned - but knew she meant it.

When she gave me the ultimatum, I think actually, some part of her was pointing me in the direction of where my healing path lay, and she, who couldn't end the cycle herself secretly, hoped I would and could. "Anne," she asks me with this ultimatum, "will it be religion or will it be your passion?"

Well art won out, I chose to not go to church, and kept my commitment going on to perform at Sycamore park for those kids. I didn't go home that night. I had my first eye opening experience with the magic of synchronicity. One of my best friend's parents was out of town for two weeks and she let me stay at her place.

Within two weeks I was working full time as a waitress and living within walking distance of the restaurant.

Within a year I was living in Paris working as an au-paire proving my mother wrong.

"That's it! " I inwardly exclaim.

There are six people ahead of me as we move towards the podium to shake hands with the guest politician and receive our diplomas. It is that kind memory of my mother, taking me to see a ballet, the magic and wonder of it all, that passion for dance, always wanting to be a dancer. It is also that hunger for piano, always begging for piano lessons. These things never manifest for me as a kid, so I decided, "that's it, I know now what it is, it is the dance! I'll do whatever it takes to declare a second major, a major in dance, no matter that I am 28, and starting at such a late age, I must do this, I just know I must." That is exactly what I did. I auditioned for the dance major and the department took me on the strength of my creativity overlooking my lack of technique. GPA fell to 3.8, because how can one compete in dance classes with those that have been dancing since they were tots. Nobody started studying dance seriously at the late age of 28 in those days, and I am not sure actually if they even do now.

Anne doesn't bother to re-read what she has written, it is too painful, somehow - she'll come back to that task later, much later, or farm it out to a friend. She chuckles in passing over the memory of her former employer, the great South African director of the tutorial center shouting out for all the world to hear at a local restaurant that if she had applied herself to business she could have been a millionaire ten times over. In a quieter moment he confided how the economics department was completely baffled by her decision to pursue the arts in that they thought she would go on to do wonderful things in the field. Anne reaches for the popcorn bowl with one hand and digs into her domino bag with the other. She pulls out two stuck together. After cramming her mouth full of popcorn she wipes her oily hand on her jeans and delicately pries the two apart. One domino has five dots and the other has four. She carefully traces the five dots and they transform into letters spelling truth. Rather than slam it on the table she places it down thoughtfully, flicks it with her finger and watches it spin in a circle. She gazes into the eyes of the office dog alive in her most recent memory, hungry for affection, and gives him a cuddle. The other domino has four dots, which morph into a single heart. She sets this down with a cascade of tears stuck in time she hopes to one day shed. Such profound gratitude her heart holds for the gift of her beloved and the single most important domino in the bag. Anne twirls her finger reducing the two dominos to one domino with nine dots. She sets as her task telling the tale in nine paragraphs.

Beloved

"I've recounted this story to so many people, so many times, why does it feel so difficult to draw it out from my soul and commit the memory to words?" Anne asks herself out loud. "Maybe it is meant to be told out loud, maybe it isn't meant to be encased in words and preserved in a book- that gives it such finality. Nothing about love is ever final; it is a fluid state that is ever changing. Or maybe it is because it draws me closer to going deeper into the tale and I'm avoiding what that might trigger. It has taken me five months to regain stability and I don't have any sick time from work to take." The coffee is hot, bitter, strong, just like she likes it. It is a new brand introduced to her by her beloved on their last camping trip - shade grown, and she has sweetened it with a squeeze from the honey bear. Anne reaches for a sip then leans into the soft tone of her beloved chatting with a friend on the telephone. She chuckles at his remark to her as he hangs up, "it is perfect naked weather." It is indeed balmy, mild, the air soft. Both of them are feeling exuberant because they are readying for their annual ritual of heading for the Channel Islands for a short getaway. Anne sets the writing aside and grounds into the rhythm of preparing for the trip; she can't seem to pull herself away from the writing and shoves the packing aside.

2

Anne took a sterile, clinical, observational approach to love the second time around cleanly severing her capacity to feel, tucking love neatly away amongst a hearty sprinkling of intrepid mothballs for good measure. Inhaling the scent of cedar, exhaling contemplation, she observes the three other women working at the restaurant with her: each going through a divorce, each shedding a bad relationship, each jumping right back into the game of love. Anne shakes her head in disbelief playing the stone cold observer. She gets an inkling of how to go about pursuit of love the night she tests her faith. The prep cook is in the kitchen; Anne is alone in the dining area of 16 tables laying out the pink scalloped edged paper placemats, napkins, and cheap grade utensils. She takes an extra moment at each table to lay hands on the glass tabletops asking dear sweet Jesus to bless the clientele. A sweet floral fragrance infiltrates the air. "This can't be" mutters Anne, "I must be imagining things, where is this smell coming from?" Two middle-aged businessmen enter and inquire about the beautiful fragrance. Anne jokes "I think it must be the plastic roses" but what she is really thinking is of the scripture, and prayer being likened to incense. With the incense comes the notion that she can choose differently than her co-workers and be conscious about what type of individual she gives her heart to. Anne launches into recounting her love story, out loud.

3

"I decided that I wasn't going to make the same mistake they were making. I didn't want to get into their business, and offer my observation that

they were setting themselves up for misery, but decided to choose a different path - I put myself on a man fast. No dating, no flirting, nothing, for at least a year, and while resisting the temptation to give my heart away to the first taker, I would work at becoming more comfortable in my own skin. With the shifts going on in my life, it seemed like a goal worthy New Years resolution. Declaring a second major in dance was a significant shift for me, as was the decision to put God on the shelf, and Jesus on the shelf, and quest for truth, which came out of the crazy decision to sell everything I owned, all of 8 gold kruggerands, and venture at my first act of "letting go" as well as "feeling the fear and doing it anyways." These were new concepts that surfaced during my man fast. As you know, I did not follow through with my dream to study with Marcel Marceau. I burned the letter of acceptance, chose love over dreams, and failed miserably at marriage.

4

As you also know by now, I had given myself permission to explore the movement arts in college taking the non-major dance classes, which brought about the epiphany that dance was a part of my true path. What you don't know is that I also revisited mime taking a movement for actors class. One evening, after a rehearsal, with a great deal of aggravation in his voice, the instructor turned to me and asked "What are you doing?" "Wha-wha-what do you mean?" I stammered back. He pressed me hard. "Why are you majoring in economics? Don't you know you were born for this?" His words rang true and cut me to the quick. I knew I couldn't go back a decade and say yes to the invitation to study at Marcel Marceau's school, but I could be true to the prompt in my heart. The prompt that came to me as I walked from the ballet studio to the modern studio on campus taking a short cut through parking lot 24 - I remember the location distinctly. When I asked my heart "what's up for summer" the reply was to take the summer off from managing the family surf shop by day, the restaurant by night, and give myself the gift of attending the theater school of Dimitri the wizard of a Swiss Clown. I didn't even know if Dimitri had a school, when I found out he did, I enrolled in two summer courses. What a fateful summer this proved to be, the summer I journeyed to Ticino, the Italian part of Switzerland, to let go of the past. Traveling alone seemed a bit more challenging than it had been my first adventure abroad, and I wondered, dreading fast approaching thirty, if this is what aging was partially about. I certainly didn't want to grow grey haired and find my butt rooted to a rocker mumbling a mantra of "I should uv and would uv if only I could uv" hence the decision to sell it all and head for Ticino. As impulsive as the action was, it just did not possess the same degree of freedom, or unbridled adventure my venture to Paris had induced in the late 70s, I attributed this to aging.

5

I was grateful though that aging hadn't robbed me of my ability to ground into the beauty of chance encounters - the reality of universal provision for openhearted travelers questing interpersonal growth. I flew into Lausanne sorting out how to get to Locarno, the closest town to Verscio where Dimitri's school was nestled, after the flight landed. After experiencing mild difficulty with figuring out how the buses and trains worked (this was before the wonders of the internet and internet information search engines), I managed to board a train bound for Locarno. I found myself lost in thought, with moments of being jostled from my thoughts by the snippets of conversation I overheard and snatched at between two fellow American travelers. The train arrived well past nightfall, and the arrival itself shocked me in that all of the businesses were seemingly shuttered up for the night. My survival instincts kicked in and I reached out towards what felt safe instinctively latched on to two fellow American travelers that had also disembarked from the train that seemed travel savvy with the air of generosity in spirit about them. I jogged after them best I could with my bags in tow. I asked if I might tag along to wherever they were going. They sleepily yet cheerfully took me under wing. As a threesome, we headed off towards a youth hostel they knew of where they cajoled our way in after hours. The next night we camped, and by the third night I had scored cheap accommodations. The hotel was managed by habited nuns and included a breakfast of bread, butter, jam, juice, coffee and hard-boiled eggs. One of the nuns led me up two flights of stairs to my room. I grinned ear to ear when she opened the door and handed me the key. When I caught sight of the space I knew, somehow, I was coming full circle, back to the dream, the dream of studying mime in Paris. It strongly resembled the room I had lived in while pursuing that dream so many years ago. I silently mouthed "thank you" to the universe gazing out the tiny window to peer over the rooftops. The room was just big enough for one under sized twin bed, a place to store my baggage, a washbasin, a small table and chair. I immediately felt at home. I hadn't intended to launch into this story, the travels to Switzerland, but there must be something in it for you the reader because it is quite insistent about being told in *the now* and it most definitely is a part of the journey that led me to being open to receiving who would become my beloved.

6

As I told you previously, I enrolled in two classes while at the school. The first in improvisation (taught in German) and the second in Commedia Dell Arte (taught in Italian.) I didn't want the teachers to know that I didn't speak either language and made do with dropping into the wonder of the universal language of gesture and vocal intonations enabling me to catch the gist of what was being taught. The students, largely European of varying ages, all hung out together after classes taking in espressos, cappuccinos, enjoying the taste of conversation, and feeding nicotine addictions. Weekends were for sunning ourselves by the river where the women taught me the pleasure of

sunbathing topless, adventurous hikes pausing to harvest wild blueberries, and adorn our hair with twigs and leaves. As we came to the hot part of the trail we happily shed our tops and settled into a long passionate discourse about life. I acquired a Swiss male friend, and although still on my man fast, my heart softened a bit for the kind hearted, soft-spoken soul. I set the boundary of "friends only" which only allowed me to connect more deeply. It wasn't these moments that stayed with me the most, but two powerful life lessons that laid the foundational base for my artistic pursuits and laid further groundwork for meeting my beloved, and the healing journey. One lesson of the two important lessons I learned that summer I learned inside class. One of the activities in our improvisation class was performing for each other in a small subterranean theater called the cave. I remember distinctly the moment inspiration struck during an improvisation, and thinking to myself "what an inspired moment - this is great." The teacher called me on my projection of ego energy. Initially, in that he was speaking in German, I didn't fully understand what he was conveying. He switched to Spanish, when that didn't work, he switched to English and told me bluntly, directly, forcefully even, that I had ruined the entire performance for everyone. Why? Because when one is on stage, and thinking of how great their work is, that is very off putting to an audience and doesn't enable them to enter in and become fully one with the performance. I blushed with great shame knowing his point to be true. A little something tugged at my heart - the value of being honest in the moment. The second lesson came from Mother Nature.

7

It was one Saturday jaunt with my "man fast" friend, Tomas, where this concept of the value of integrity and honest completely restructured my worldview. We hitchhiked to a neighboring valley in Vallemagia. I distinctly remember the look about the couple that dropped us off. I swore later to Tomas that they must have been angels. The way they looked at each other conspiratorially, then at us, smiling knowingly. We hiked directly up the valley pausing along the way to drink from a spring where someone had set out a tin cup for passerby's. Around an hour and a half into our adventure I stood stock-still. I could hear it, feel it, the song of the mountain: I felt a resonance within me begin to resound with this song, and I became one with the mountain. I fell prostrate on the nearest rock covered in a fine layer of moss. Beside me, the earth fell away, and a good ways below a raging river spat up a fine mist. I became aware of the ants sharing the boulder I was on. I could not move, nor utter a word for what seemed like a very long time. An even greater awareness than the resonance of the mountain dropped into my being. In that moment I understood the greatest work of art of all to be creation itself, and that it is a thing of great wonder, beauty, integrity, and honesty. I suddenly understood that I too was a part of this great work; and that if I, as a creative being, wanted my work to have any power at all, then

the work that flowed through me ought to harmonize with these aspects of nature. In that moment, with inward x-rays eyes, I scanned my character owning that I wasn't living my life as honestly as I could. I felt a mission to make creative work of integrity that would resonate with the way nature organizes herself and in order to do this, I would need to embrace change and seek ways of fostering greater degrees of honesty in my life. So, I sold everything I owned to travel to Switzerland to let go of the past, and came away with a lesson worth more than the weight of that mountain measured in gold."

8

Anne did the math right, she returned from Switzerland with exactly 25 cents in her pocket. Her first day back her former employer at the Mexican restaurant saw her walking down the main drag of the Latin part of town and called out to her from his passing truck "get back to the restaurant! We need you!" Her best friend Lisa put her up in her converted garage apartment with all of Anne's belongings fitting into a large whicker basket stored beneath Lisa's drafting table next to her upright piano. She slept in the living room next to Timmy the aged Sheltie. A few weeks later, by chance, she bumped into a college friend who learned she was a bit strapped for cash, and looking for a place. He offered what he had in a house he was renting for \$200 a month, requiring no deposit, no last months' rent to move in. It wound up being a very large walk in closet converted into a very small sleeping space and Anne gladly jumped at the opportunity. It was a student household and people tended to come and go. At one point a crazy alcoholic moved in with his demented black lab that spent much of his time humping his masters' covers. All it took was for Lisa to point out "Anne, you are ALWAYS at school working, why don't you just sleep in the dance studio at night and come stay with me on weekends?" So Anne did exactly that. She rented three lockers at school. One for her books, one for her vitamins and food that she could cook in the microwave provided by the snack shack, and one at the gym where she showered. Her other belongings she carted around in a large duffle bag that she would stuff at night underneath an old set of theater seats in the dressing room of the modern dance studio. The same set of seats she tucked a bedroll that she would unfurl at night underneath the piano. In *the now* her heart goes out to the Latino janitor that kept her safe at night as she dozed under the piano in the studio watching the moon shadows slowly glide down the walls, and listened to the distinctive whirl of skateboarders passing in the night. He laid watch every night as she stealthily dozed for other janitors. If they began to come into the studio to clean, he'd divert them and turn them away saving Anne from being discovered. There was no toilet in the dance studio. If Anne had to pee at night she would have to stealthily cross over to another building across the bike path and up a flight of open stairs to the theater department's restrooms, which were always open. She would revisit

the same bathroom at the crack of dawn to brush her teeth before heading off campus into the neighboring community to down coffee and donuts before her first class. It was while Anne was pseudo-homeless that she gained a profound appreciation for having a place to put one's bar of soap one could call his or her own, or a place to make one's own cup of coffee. She gained a degree of empathy for the homeless that had not been there before. It was also while she was living in the dance studio that she met her beloved. Some aspect of Anne's being digs his/her heels in deep and REFUSES to let her divulge the poetry of their first meeting. It is much too personal, intimate, her most precious treasure, and she reserves the story for the closest of friends to be told out loud in celebratory moments. She divulges what she can.

9

"I met my beloved while living at the dance studio and I proposed to him two weeks after we met. A month later he had me over for a meal to meet his parents. I did not know at that time that the rash around my chest and back was shingles, and by morning I was in excruciating pain. My beloved took me to the clinic where the doctor called in several other doctors to show them what he thought might very well be the worse case of shingles he had ever seen. It was clear that I could not convalesce living out of the dance studio. My beloved took me in and nursed me back to health, and I never left. It was finding the love of my life, that one someone I could trust with my life, that became the most important domino that needed to be set in place before Mother Nature could tip her finger and set the healing process in motion."

Anne, in the telling of this portion of the tale, has found herself back at the kitchen table. She and her beloved are fresh back from the Channel Islands. On the trip she hears that still small voice for the first time in a very, very, very long time. "It is time to let go of being angry with me." It is the concept of the divine, of God, the concept she had turned her back on so long ago as she quested for truth, as she searched for the answer to that particular why, as she embraced the path of what she felt she had been called to do replacing one religion for another - the religion of art. Her fragmented self touches the anger, and the Dylan aspect acknowledges, "Yes, we're angry, very, very angry. How could you let this happen to me? Why? I don't know how, to let go of the anger, but because you are asking, well, I'll work on it, I'll try." The voice comes again. "And while you are at it, could you please try and forgive me?"

Anne has a dream the second night back from camping. It is one of those dreams where it seems more real than if she were awake at high noon after three cups of strong coffee. She is in a graveyard in the mountains and she sees and fully acknowledges the unspeakable past, the rituals, the dark deeds, and the dark tales. From the islands, she brings back a very particular rock. It is the plainest most ordinary rock she has ever encountered. She is fascinated by its simplicity. Anne embraces that this is a period of her life that calls her

to further simplify. The voice of her father echoes in her mind. "You are going to be a nun Anne, a nun." She chuckles to herself with her love for meditation, and of late, mindfulness giggling at the thought that she might actually like being a Buddhist nun.

Anne returns to the story of the three women. While on the islands the idea came to her of how she should develop it and she shared this idea with her beloved. The last contact the three women had with each other they made a pact to find each other on earth. They would do so by seeking each other out through a birthday club. A club for those born on the same day. They would recognize each other in the club because they would not only be born on the same day, but the same year as well as exactly the same time. They decided against being born in the same city and the same hospital and drew straws over who would be born on a tropical island. Anne isn't sure which of the three characters she will play herself - perhaps the fat one that subsists on cake. She hates the medication she has been taking to get her through this rough patch of PTSD in that it induces weight gain. Anne is heavier than she has been in thirty years. She is grateful she is where she is now in her career as a dancer in that she's long since shed the idea that being ultra fit with 17% body fat and weighing 98 pounds is a requisite for being a performer. The nature of the dance is shifting. Especially now that she's begun modeling for life drawing classes in hopes of doing a better job of making ends meet. This type of dance requires a bit more meat on the bones. "God I hope I don't have any nightmares tonight", she thinks. "What is the point of all this anyways - who cares about this crap?"

"I do"

Says who?

"Me"

Anne is tired of the conversation, even before it has begun and decides to let the story rest. She knows that she is stable enough to wean off the PRN med for sleep that also causes her mood to drop in to depressed states. Her mood will bounce back up once she is weaned off of it. She knows her system that well. Before tucking herself in with her teddy bears for the night she looks up the meaning of cemetery in a dream dictionary and is gladdened by the discovery.

"The end of a habit, a condition, a rebirth."

Chapter Two: Dark Night of the Soul

It is a good month before Anne returns to her writing project. The Arts Collective has been hard at work grant writing. After they collectively finished the UNESCO grant that is a longer than long shot as well as a local county grant which is a sure bet, she gives herself permission to take a bit of a break before launching into the other long shot, an NEA grant, and returns to the story.

The Seventh Domino

Anne steps outside of herself again - a safer distance - and offers the seventh and final domino from afar. It is approaching the end of a new year and Anne is at the beach with her best friend Lisa after a quick journey up their favorite canyon in her old blue Volvo. Anne is watching two children blowing bubbles enjoying watching the colors dance before the bubbles burst against a polarized blue sky. Such a pretty time of year and the two of them are loving the warmth of yet another California Indian summer. The last resolution Anne had made was the man fast, and now that that was over, and she was living in sin with the love of her life questing for truth, and trusting the process, having completely let go of religion, but not abandoning her sense of spirituality, she opened her heart up to query about what might be a good focus for the coming year.

She was at the tail end of her journey at the college getting towards the end of completing her dance requirements and had been accepted to a graduate program in dance at a prestigious arts college. The answer to the question, one she had been asking for several years, it came to her suddenly. The still small voice says, look to your childhood for the answers to your questions. She does, and she realizes, that although she can remember quite a bit, there are also great big pockets of nothingness, she counters back, "Okay, I'll go there."

It is after the New Year, it is the Eve of Martin Luther King's birthday when Anne has a series of memories. Her subconscious shows her a series of things that seem to illustrate the cause and effect. An experience as a child, and how it impacts her present moment. For instance, her love of oatmeal cookies, and remembrance of receiving an oatmeal cookie as a reward for being good. There is a long stream of memories of happy moments, and then there comes one, she is in the shower with her father, and something about being in the shower that doesn't seem right. Anne feels safe enough to speak it, to tell this part of the story, and fully owns this experience.

"It is dim in the art studio. It has been many years since I've taken a drawing class. I am in the drawing class because of a class requirement for my newly declared second major in dance. I aced the anatomy class where it entailed mere book study. However, when it came to the corpse, the cadaver, the class where I would have to cut into a body, I took one look at the

cadaver, went into a panic and nearly fainted. I fled to the dance administrative office boldly declaring I could not take this class explaining my reaction. They were kind enough to let me substitute a life drawing class at the local community college. When I arrived to what I thought was the first day class the room was empty. I realized I had arrived one week early, which wasn't unusual for me, being out of synch with time and space. I took time for stillness sitting in the coolness of the dim studio with some light filtering through a stand of eucalyptus trees, and the eaves of the drapery drawn across a northerly facing window. I sat on the edge of the model stand enjoying the coolness, the stillness, the quiet. The still small voice inside boomed beyond its usual whisper "If you have the courage to take this class, your life will never be the same." "Why courage?" I asked. There was no response.

There is something about dance, which requires one to look inward in order to make the physical, energetic, soulful, and spiritual connections that builds the foundation of dance technique. A process, which is much about cultivating awareness. I was discovering, in my own process, that when awareness would surface with regard to discovering a physiological connection with a particular region of the body, an inner light of awareness would flicker on, and light up, flooding that region with the illumination of understanding. At this phase in my development as a dancer I had a great deal of difficulty finding light in my pelvis and that was my present focus, finding connections there. Perhaps it was the question, what is going on inside here, why am I not able to see inside my pelvis, that caused the pain to begin to surface in my unmentionables. I had been feeling pain in my anus.

There was a quick trip to our community's favored bookstore one day, which was close to where I was living at the time, my intuition prompting me in my search for an answer to why the pain in my anus. I was drawn to a particular title in the self-help section, pulled it off the shelf, and let it open randomly. My eyes fell on a passage that described the memory process for people who are recovering from trauma. Often pain occurs in the body prior to a memory surfacing in relation to what causes the pain. I snapped the book shut. In the moment I would not, and could not digest a single bit more of information. I did digest that bit however; digest it very well, washing it down with a very difficult swallow.

The next week I went to the first drawing class and was pleasantly surprised, that although I hadn't drawn in years, my work had somehow strengthened. I mused, it must be, as one grows as a person, that growth translates into all mediums of expression in life. I was working on the very last drawing in class, and it was the closing moments of class when some force took control of body. I felt the texture of my body change and I suddenly felt like someone else. This aspect took a big fat piece of dark compressed charcoal and drew over my pretty drawing in a totally different drawing style than my usual style using a great deal of weight as well as with a degree of boldness I would never use when drawing. I took one look at the

drawing and said, "Oh, I understand that, I get that, I'll own that." Words weren't put to the experience, it was just acknowledging the abstract nature of what that image represented."

Again, Anne distances herself from the story, and switches back to pretending it were someone else's life, yet continues on with the story. Words were put to the drawing the next day in Anne's contemporary dance class taught by her favorite teacher. The luscious gay boy that all the girls in class lusted after and remarked how they would love to carry his baby. The students were in the portion of class where center work was complete. They were moving across the floor with a fluid combination with large swooping movements requiring a technique level well above Anne's level. Anne suddenly began to think to herself, in relation to her pelvis, "Dad, fuck you, get out of my hips, you don't own me, these are my hips." Suddenly the wonderful light of illumination flooded her hips, and she felt the energy shift. Her teacher exclaimed a positive exclamation. "That's it Anne, wonderful connection in your hips, what's going on?" Anne blurted out to the entire class "Well, you'd be tight up your ass if your father had fucked you." Anne immediately stopped dancing, shock over what had spilled out of her mouth, and went to sit in a chair on the sidelines of class her knees held firmly together, her hands resting palm downward on her thighs. The class was silent for a moment, and then, without missing a beat, went back into action. After the class finished several students came to Anne to check in with her. The moment they surrounded her with a container of comfort and concern her first abreaction/body memory/altered state occurred. Having no idea what was happening, the thought of little children being sexual violated having ever crossed her mind, Anne suddenly felt as if she were 3 or 4 years old. She began to say, "owie, hurt tight, owie, hurt tight" with feelings of being choked. Her anus was on fire and it felt like it was being ripped in two.

G-d flicked his/her finger and the dominos set up rippled through Anne's system, and she found herself overtaken by processing a Post Traumatic Stress Disorder she did not know she had, and with it, horror stories beyond belief. This occurred spontaneously, without the support of a counselor or therapist. Anne had heard a buzz about something called false memory syndrome and from the onset of her process decided she would do what she could to keep the process untainted by any suggestion, or influence, but she needn't worry about that. Once the process was in motion there was no holding back the flood. Initially, she had 3 to 4 flashbacks a day. Her beloved kept her safe; somehow, he knew what to do. In the moments where agony led her to bash her head repeatedly against the wall he gently pulled her away. When she crawled into a closet in order to feel safe while processing he would be there as a silent witness and coaxed her out when the abreaction was spent. Anne knew she needed help, and the first place she headed was the college-counseling center. After two sessions, they told her, we are sorry we cannot help you. Anne was beginning to have memories that would fall under the

general category of ritual abuse. They sent Anne away without any advice about where to go, who might be able to help, without even explaining to Anne what was going on in her body. She met with one counselor in the community who also felt ill equipped to help but steered her in the right direction, referring her to a woman who was helping other ritual abuse survivors. The goal was to contain the flashbacks to therapy so her beloved would not have to be the one containing the process overseeing things to make sure Anne was safe.

The first meeting Anne was welcomed by the therapist, and by Maggie, the empathetic and spunky terrier. The therapist did not get beyond an introduction. Anne just simply began to process a body memory. It was the second session that really stunned Anne. All of sudden, she started becoming an observer in the process, and was hearing stories told by different parts of her with different names. Anne discovered she had developed what was then called, a multiple personality disorder.

In *the now*, Anne rifles through her files. She is searching for the letter to a member of their arts collective, Tansy, with whom she had been collaborating with for the past six years, and had known each other for even longer. They were close enough that she shared intimate details of her life, and Anne often went to her with her most difficult issues seeking advice. Tansy, a writer by trade, witnessed Anne go through her florid decompensation as she returned to her book project, and was reading draft chapters as she sent them along offering her encouragement, assuring her that her writing skills were strong. Anne's different aspects were comfortable in the studio, and Tansy was accustomed to seeing Anne switch, and was very patient with having to learn and relearn material as different aspects surfaced "driving the body" who hadn't yet learned the duet section of the group work she was dancing with Tansy.

Anne begins to weave the letter into her unfurling story, and then shoves it aside, for another day. It is time to get ready for the bronze casting final class. She very much feels like Anne today, but the Dylan aspect of her psyche has been the one signed up for the class, and asked to be called Dylan. The teacher prefers to call her Anne, so it's just as well, Anne she will be.

Chapter Three: False Memory Syndrome: What is Your Guess?

Letter to Tansy

Dear Tansy,

Thanks for your curiosity about why life has been so hellacious of late, and why after eight years of stability I have been struggling again. No, it was not all of the media about Woody Allen's daughter triggering me. I do not follow the news consistently and had not heard of it. When I looked for it, I realized it is a story where there is a lot of controversy around whether the abuse happened or not, so, I am assuming that somehow you wonder about my own journey and whether I am making all of this shit up. The last thing a survivor wants to hear is "that could never have happened to you." We want our experiences to be honored for what they are and how they surface. The body, in my experience, never lies. It is not capable of it.

The mind - maybe...

But the body, the heart, the soul, and the spirit – I do not think so.

I especially appreciate your honesty when I asked directly why you linked my story with this particular story. I wondered if perhaps you come from a place of not believing I had bad owies, really, really bad owies in the past. My survival plan included creating many different rooms to house the experiences in, so that the host identity, Anne, would never have a clue. She was let live a happy life with exposure to what she calls normal abuse. An alcoholic father and crazed mother having at it with belt beatings, bloody noses, bashed in walls all while we knelt to say our rosaries and went to confession even. Fucker that priest! Those nuns! Perpetrators themselves to which I growl grrrrrrrr. It felt good to hear that yes, you do cope with difficult things, including denial.

To tell you the truth, I use denial regularly, to pace my recovery process, because to be honest, I do not think I could live with myself embracing everything stored in my memory bank as fact, or even a mix of fact/fiction/fantasy, or even complete, and total fantasy. I at times sink into complete and total denial that my other selves exist. I may at times entertain the notion that I have some weird disease that gets her rocks off by self-inflicting hell on herself labeling the experience as a mix of fact, fiction, and fantasy. This help the host aspect of me, the aspect you now best, to move forwards in life living in *the now* with some degree of ability.

No one would ever know looking at my life that I suffer and struggle with the healing process at times. I just updated my artist resume for an application for project consideration at The Kitchen, and looking at this,

really, I am in shock. How in the hell have I accomplished SO MUCH with a condition with such a wretched, stinky, appalling, horrid social stigma attached to it? A stigma that might say – this good for nothing sod will NEVER EVER amount to a hill of gas passed from the beans ‘et with no beano. Not only the art, but also managing the proverbial bread and butter gig artists living in America generally holds. Nobody would ever know – I do not think. However, if they knew, would they think less of me? Yes – I am certain, so I hide it to the best of my abilities.

I loathe the stigma attached to trauma, posttraumatic stress, dissociative identities, psychotic breaks, labels, labels, labels and endless labels. Simply loathe it, which is why I strive for this writing project to be the best that it can be. To somehow do what I can to chip away at that stigma, and make it easier for those behind me, where I was at 22 years ago when I began to process. I know the path of trailblazers ahead of me have made my journey easier!

I do believe, that to spite these wretched labels, I am soulfully and spiritually and creatively blessed. I see my condition as a great big boon and am especially grateful that it has cultivated in me a greater capacity to be empathetic, kind, compassionate, and to commit to allowing for a hunger for growth to be my guiding force. I choose forgiveness rather than bitterness, spite, and the bleak landscape of hatred. I choose to be passionate and honest with regard to giving and helping others. These positive traits I coin as the flip side of torture. Not to say that the struggle doesn’t still exist, with moments of: self-loathing, bitterness, shame, a sundry of complex negative emotions, negative chatter, and old belief systems that impede my mobility and no longer serve my sense of life work. This appears to be how the process works. I chip away at it bit by bit, one drip at a time, and may ultimately never be whole in the way a person is whole that was born loved into a family and community with great child rearing skills. I get that all of these extra neurological connections I have made in order to create so many different mental rooms are miraculous. For this, I am hugely grateful, although the texture of gratitude itself isn’t a resonance I completely understand.

Now, False Memory Syndrome - back to that. I have not read much about it – but I do have an opinion about it that has been formulated from my own experience. My parents at one point sent me some literature through the mail about it. My current therapist says that is “so 80’s, it doesn’t jive with current research.” I would never, ever, ever in a million years pass judgment on another survivor’s journey. My take is - the proponents of this syndrome? Well, they are more than likely perpetrators themselves, or, victims in denial who have not yet begun to process their issues. My own perpetrators sent me literature about false memory syndrome, I’ve observed friends struggle, and I suppose that is how I draw this conclusion. There I said that. I just don’t know enough to say whether it is possible for someone else to create an experience and implant it in someone’s consciousness. The research that has been conducted in this area doesn’t support that being possible, but perhaps down

the line it will, I just don't know. What I do know is my own experience. I do know, that one can go back into a memory, and put within it a joyous one.

I did that with your son Nicholas actually. When images and flashes would come up when greatly triggered, I would insert your 10-year-old humor warrior in the mix and he would diffuse the intensity of the flashback. Something I picked up randomly when conducting an Internet search for help for PTSD. When I began the recovered memory process no therapist was present. If a therapist wasn't present, well, then those memories couldn't have been "planted" in me now could they? Context is everything, the frame, so I'd like to paint a little portrait of who I was at the time the shit hit the fan.

At this point, I'd like to share something from one of my remaining journals (I've just recently gone through a purge and destroyed most.) A letter I wrote to my first therapist, who I recently discovered has passed. It will have a bit of retelling of the story, so bear with me as I repeat myself, but I think it will shed a little more light on the notion of false memory syndrome. I have edited the letter very little for this writing project because I wanted to retain the "voice" of my psyche at that phase in my healing journey.

My first therapist interviewed me for her PhD thesis project, which, in hindsight was completely and totally inappropriate. I stayed with her for six months. I discontinued seeing her the one day I felt she was "fishing" by asking me questions about an uncle. I heard of this notion of false memory syndrome and didn't want to have anything taint the process that was ravaging my spirit, soul, mind, and body on a quest to manifest healing. She has since passed. In that this is a good record of my state of consciousness at the time I've done very little editing.

Dear Cynthia,

We got our materials, thanks. We read through them, thanks. It's too hard for A. to really make changes to anything so I think we'll just send it back and say go ahead with the process. There were a few things that seemed to be incongruent with what we remember having expressed, but A. doesn't want to listen to her tapes. The opportunity to express ourselves and to receive a document that archives one tiny snippet of a very huge process was most helpful. We are grateful, that A. realizes that the process is huge, and that there is still a lot of work to do, although so much work has been done already.

Hi C., ummm....yeah..re: the above...a little wiped out in life to really respond/add/delete...I want, for self, at least try and organize a bit of the experience in that switching back and forth in the interview made the information seem rather disjointed.

Key things that helped created the container for process within the larger unseen magic and mystery of life.

Curiosity, always wanting to know why from a very young age.

A ravenous appetite for learning.

A commitment to diligently working on becoming a "better" person (For a decade or so pre-memory I'd get still and listen and ask God-what should I focus on this year-to grow).

A story my mother told when she wasn't her "witch" personality. A story of seeking truth and having a powerful spiritual experience.

Running, always running, a tomboy refusing to wear dresses for most of life, tears, never wanting to grow up.

Learning to listen to the still small voice inside-what I called God-and take action based on the promptings-always happy with the outcomes.

Nature. Loving nature, bare feet, open fields, horses.

Denial of two requests due to family lack of funds, dance and piano.

Never being home-but always outside playing. Fights, alcohol, violence, my brother slammed up against the wall with a bloody nose, we go to church on Sundays.

When I was 20, living in Paris, I was aware that things weren't quite right with me - there were issues with food, addictive tendencies, self-image issues. My curiosity led me to question, what is this stuff? Why? I looked to Jesus for the solution; I thought he could fix everything so I deepened my commitment to Him. It was this place in life, on through until around a year "pre-memory" the only book I read (unless it was a text book when in college) was the bible. I did the Holy Roller charismatic thing complete with laying hands on the sick, praying in tongues, bible studies, passing out tracts, preaching that Jesus was the only way. I'd lay hands on the tables at the restaurant where I worked and pray for the customers before they came in. In this period, I witnessed some unusual "paranormal" sorts of things. I dealt with my issues by memorizing scripture verses and applying them like medication. I'd also use my sit still and listen to the Holy Spirit approach. It was so neurotic at one point that I'd pray about which street to take, turn right or left; sit for how long, what to eat, what to wear.

Each New Year I'd get an image of what I should work on. Bit by bit I worked at what I could and used mostly will power to effect change. I managed to build a bit of confidence and trust in myself. In retrospect, these actions seemed like a vital prep for letting go and entering into the heat of the underworld, shadow dances, and transformation. My capacity to trust had

been annihilated, so building a bit in me seemed important. It's important to have some thread anchored somewhere when the process starts. A slow deterioration process began. A bad marriage, being depressed and not knowing I was depressed, living in denial about my day to day pain, my cat-my sole support-dying-putting up with a lot-including no plants in the house, no Christmas trees at Christmas time, no reading the bible or playing Christian music in the house (my husband was a Christian until the day we married, he snorted coke, got stoned on pot, and never went back to church more than a few times). I went to see a counselor, who suggested I go back to school. He said that individuals such as my husband never changed. He'd get on his knees at times, and beg me to leave. I thought Jesus could do anything, and hung on in hopes for a miracle. The advice from a television actor made famous on Hill Street Blues (so a friend told me who he was) seeing me in the pits while jogging with his dog on the golf course near where I lived jarred things loose. He told me he didn't know much about Religion (after I poured my heart out to him) but that he did know about the part about Jesus saying to shake the dust off your feet and get on with it. The advice of a compassionate "heathen" took root, and when my husband began ordering me to pack boxes, I complied. I moved back in with my folks. Then the fight (A. tell later) over money then owed me, and I moved out. I was at their home for a period of two years, I think.

Posttraumatic stress symptoms began to rule my life. I was homeless living in the dance studio at school. All of my belongings were in 4 lockers (one for food, one for vitamins, one for books, one for clothes) and one basket at my best-friends house where I would travel 2 hours by bus to get to on the weekends-and sleep on a flea infested carpet 3 x 5 next to a sheltie named Timmy...a dying dog. I was using nicotine, caffeine, sugar, and alcohol as coping mechanism more and more as my ability to stay super busy seemed to weaken. I was an A student-super achiever-lambda phi beta kappa work two jobs 60 days without a day off in summer. I wanted to know why my brother M, and sister M. had "snapped" and was living on the edge, labeled schizophrenic. I was perplexed by my mother's comments of the church, how they weren't using discernment that witches went to church. I was perplexed by my sister S.'s case. My parents taking her across the country to visit with a minister who specialized in casting out demons-why were they so proud of the report that "she was the most demon-possessed case" they had ever encountered. Christianity wasn't working for me, as if it ever had, as if anyone had ever seen through my parent's guise and seen through to what was really going on-no hope of rescue there. The more I prayed, and the more I fasted, the more I memorized scripture verses the more out of control my life began to feel. I began to question deeper, who was I, and what was I doing? I had a vague notion arise of how my experience with Christianity led me to believe that I was wonderful, perfect, whole, forgiven. I asked myself. Is this a true picture of myself? I bought a book, a collection of essays on the "shadow" of

humanity's psyche. I began to ask. What is in my shadow?

I put God on the shelf, I put Jesus on the shelf, and I began to meditate on truth, a mantra, asking the universe for a greater manifestation of truth in my spirit, my soul, my mind and my body. It was the notion of my mother's truth experience. It was the experience I had in Switzerland. Selling everything I owned after a failed marriage and setting out to let go of an old dream. Not wanting to be grey haired, and rocking, and chanting....I should of and would of if only I could have. At 20 I was living in Paris chasing dreams. I wanted to study mime with Marcel Marceau. I was accepted. I declined. I burned the letter and shed bitter tears. I thought Jesus was coming back at any moment, I thought love was more important than dreams. My mother expressed "you should come home". When I came back she expressed "why didn't you stay." I took one look at the man I was coming back to marry and my stomach turned. I am coming back for this? I was confused. In my state of confusion I married my own sense of truth. An abusive husband modeled after my abusive father perceiving/feeling sickness as love. Eight years of hell.

Divorce.

Taking a class in mime at the university as a means of letting go.

The teacher thinking my efforts professional invites me to join his company. One night after rehearsal, asking me what are you doing? (I was planning on pursuing a PhD in economics) You were created to do this-why are you doing that (so to speak)

So

I need to let go of the past.

And pursue the dream a tiny bit and get clear.

Is it dance/movement/art? Or is it a PhD. One day I ask the little voice, what should I do this summer. Mime school.

Dimitri

It rings so true. Does he even have a school?

My parents, I inform them I am going. What? You can't go. You have to stay and work at the business. We won't give you the money we owe you. I take the risk and calculate. If I sell everything I own, I'll come back penniless. I choose to trust the universe and depart to Switzerland. '

In an improvisation class I am aware of the brilliance of my work. The

teacher. He expresses. You weren't honest, I could see you enjoying your wit, and it tainted the work. It is the honesty thing coming up again to smack me upside the head asking me "Are you listening?" I take an excursion on the weekend with my Swiss boyfriend. We arrive in a valley so beautiful that I feel the songs of the mountain resonate with the song in my own body. I lie prostrate on a rock. Ants crawl over my bare skin. The mist from the river rises. I realize in that moment two things: that the greatest work of art of all is creation itself, and that we as humans are a part of the greatest work of art, and that nature doesn't lie. I realized that if I wanted my art to have any impact in the world it needed to reflect my part in being a part of nature - this expression of the greatest work of art of all. To do this, I needed to seek out living with a greater degree of honesty and truthfulness in my day to day living.

So, I become a seeker of truth. God is on the Shelf, Jesus is on the shelf, and I fall in love with a wonderful man who plays the piano. He has met all the requisites on my checklist of around 35 things I was looking for in a relationship. Several weeks later I am sick with the shingles, at the young age of 28; he is my knight in shining armor and cares for me. I never leave. I am not homeless anymore. I begin to have night terrors. Nightmares of children in cages, burned and boiled babies, figures chasing me with hands that turn into blades, my father in the shower with me, why is he there? I work through the thoughts, threats of hell and damnation, of living in sin. The still small voice queries, "Who married Adam and Eve?" I ask for signifiers from the universe that I am taking the right path. Rainbows become the signifier whenever I am sunk in doubt; they seem to appear on a cloud in broad daylight, or after a rain, whenever I ask. I trust this new path, this desire to know, this desire for more truth in me.

My father calls. It's been two years. I had divorced my parents. I had come to realize that they were abusive and had an inner sense that I needed to be free from them if I was going to get answers to my questions of why I was so messed up, my siblings, messed up. He asks me about my sister Natalie. "A n n e" in his slow, long and d r a w n out voice, "Your sister Natalie (he is testing the waters). "She is saying I abused her and your mother knew about it. What do you think?"

"I don't know Dad. But if she is getting better that is what counts, what's true for her."

Click.

I hang up.

Fast forward to New Year's resolution time. The still small voice prompts action. "Look to your childhood for all of your unanswered

questions.” I look within. I am at the beach enjoying an Indian Summer, with my best friend Lisa. I mark out the years I try to remember what I was doing when. I can't remember-much-some things-but not much. O.k. I'll go there. I'll do that.

It's the eve of Martin Luther King's birthday. My hero way back when and now. I have my first flood of memories. Nothing awful, just things that show me, how things I do in the present moment relate to past experiences such as loving oatmeal cookies. I remember my mother giving me oatmeal cookies when I was good. The final memory that evening is a flash of being in the shower with my father. It is daytime, I am not supposed to be taking a shower with my father, why am I in the shower? I don't sleep much. Hours after this first string of memories the Riverside earthquake rocks my bed. Yeah. Something is shaking loose, something big, and what is shaking loose causes me to defer my acceptance into graduate school.

The still small voice, again, begins to prompt me. “Take that figure drawing class you have always wanted to take.” I go to the class. It is a class actually that I need to take for my dance major. I walked into the anatomy class, saw the cadaver, freaked and asked what my options were. Life drawing, you can take a life drawing class in lieu of anatomy.

I am one week early. The room is empty. Again, that still small voice. If you take this class, your life will never be the same. My body, I don't understand what is going on. For days I have been feeling pain in my anus, choking sensations, what is this? I surf the self-help section at my favorite local bookstore and my hand glides to pick up a book about memory. In a relaxed, intuitive fashion, I allow the book to open where it ought. My eyes dart and settle on a paragraph. The paragraph communicates that often times the body will feel pain in the area where trauma occurred prior to accessing the memory. I slam the book closed. Put it on the shelf. I go to the first drawing class. It's good to be back. It's been 15 years or so. I take the same teacher who once told me I had no talent (so to speak), that I might make it as a commercial artist. I work my way through the class. The last drawing, there is some impulse, some part of me, it takes a piece of charcoal and scribbles a drawing in a different style than my own right over my drawing. I look, the anus, I know, in the pit of my gut, but don't let it rise fully to my brain.

The next day in class, in modern dance, I begin to address my next phase of body discovery, the pelvis. It seems locked, it seems dark, and I can't seem to make the right connections. I think. Dad, you don't own my hips. Fuck you. Get out of my hips. This is my body. All of a sudden, amazing connections are being made. The teacher instantly comments on the change. I shout back. Well, you'd be tight too if your father fucked you up the ass -stone cold silence. I go and sit on a wooden chair, knees together; hands on my thighs, the good girl pose, in shock.

After class a friend approaches. I know something is going on. I had gone to see a counselor at the student-counseling center on campus a couple

days prior to the experienced and expressed my worries of the pains I was feeling in my body. The counselor observed that I appeared to be choking. I couldn't figure out why, and the counselor didn't bother to prep me about "body memories", or what I might be experiencing. (back to the studio). My friend, her arms around me, "I am so sorry. I didn't know."

Whammo - suddenly I am 2 or 3, choking; "Owie hurt tight" comes out of my mouth. My body is racked in pain. I am screaming. My pelvis feels as if it has been ripped in two, an abreaction, I have no idea what an abreaction is! I have no idea what a body memory is! And the process begins. There is a two-month period of non-stop memory hell before I hook up with a therapist, someone who has worked with ritual abuse survivors. I am in utter shock. How can these memories of satanic cult activities be true? My parents, I, my siblings, all, Christians, first Catholic and then Born Again brain-washed fanatics. It can't be true. I must be lying. But I have been asking for truth. How can my quest for truth be spitting back lie after lie after lie. This is impossible.

So, THIS is how I came to enter the healing flow of recovering from Post Traumatic Stress Disorder brought on by extreme abuse. THIS is how I entered the flow.

I am still in major denial and am not getting all that far.

"No she's not." (another part writes) "Now A. has all of us. We are many and we are also her. In order to survive we made a happy baby, which was A. (she changed her name to M. because we had a Satan Sunday school class where she won a prize for having a name that had the most letters to spell Satan with-someone says it wasn't a Sunday school class-I say it was-that's the hard part-we all have different viewpoints on what happened because of the switching we did to survive)."

Sorry.

I sidetracked. Again my parts push to the surface. I can't suppress what wants to be expressed.

"So we made a happy baby and an unhappy baby. The unhappy baby was like the conscious baby's sleeping twin. When bad things happened then the conscious baby called A. would go to sleep, and we would wake up and take over the job of experiencing the bad owies. Sometimes with a really bad owie we would use ten parts to manage one experience, like later in life when A. was a teenager. Early on in our development there was some communication between us to A., but we learned that wasn't safe and built up a big wall between us. A. she was named then. She went and told the nuns. They told her

she was lying, that good catholic families wouldn't do that, but the good catholic families were doing *that*, *that* being, weird religion that hurts children, and uses sex and violence and prostitution and drugs and torture and awful, awful, awful, dreadful and despicable things as a part of their religion. S. religion and bad abuse in the home and other places. Umm...hard tell story. Hard tell."

So, for me (M.) this was an excruciatingly difficult process. At home 95% of the memory work was happening with uncontained flashbacks, a flooded system, and abreactions with no medication support. During therapy 5% of the memory work was managed. Initially the process was like the wild west with no Sheriff or law enforcement to keep things in order. My system was out of control. My husband was the container for the process for most of the memories by default every day – making sure I was keeping myself safe – pulling me away from the wall as I lay there weeping bashing my head against it repeatedly. For six months I had 2 to 3 flashbacks a day with extreme altered states of consciousness. Banging my head against the wall, rocking back and forth for long periods of time, hiding in closets, in corners, utter catatonia, I would sit frozen at the kitchen table for hours attempting to get my body to move. Simple tasks, like writing a few checks would take hour instead of minutes. I was plagued by night mares, sleep disturbances, suicide impulses, programming to kill myself for telling, to kill those I tell, hiding the knives from myself. The multiplicity came out quickly in this journey.

"M. remained awake when we told our stories (switch o.k. we indicate when we switch) and we know now that that is called co-consciousness, which is different than other stories, where the host identity (the one that got to live the happy, edited version of life) might stay asleep when the alters or parts that hold the nightmares come out into the daylight to tell their stories."

This part of the process is hard, the switching back and forth. I keep telling myself that I am integrated, but I guess, that isn't the case. Sometimes I wonder if I'll ever get there, or if it even matters. Functioning, and cooperating, and being happy seems to be more important. It's hard, to have dreams dashed. This process has been so debilitating yet so liberating. The confusion, not knowing who I am, is hard.

"Well, it may be hard for her, but we are glad to be out and alive. Not all of us feel that way, but most of us. Things are pretty good now. We got a good part-time job that leaves time for therapy, and art, and our cat, and our friends, and Mr. S. What's hard for us is being in a relationship with Mr. S. When M. met S., we weren't a part of the picture. Well, we are a part of the picture, and he doesn't like some of us, and like, how do you resolve that? It's not like we can hack some of us off and send us off to have our own boyfriends or girlfriends. We hide out a lot. Now we try only to come out in therapy. No, that's not true. We do get a lot of space at home. But, mostly, we really get to come out in therapy. But that's bad because we don't get to have a relationship like a real deep friend, with hugs and stuff. For one, we are

scared of hugs. I am getting the signal that I am getting off track, that we are supposed to be writing the story. Maybe we aren't ready to tell this part. It's good that some of it is told though! I think it's an important point though! The point that the very members of our club that knew the greatest pain, and had the biggest courage are perceived as the ugliest, most unacceptable, and these are the parts that need love, acceptance, nurturance. Therapy isn't enough, it's too bad the world didn't have a big enough heart to be able to understand, and be able to be o.k. with our switching. One friend of M. was really angry at us: she told M. she didn't like us, but another friend of M. said, she didn't care, that she likes all of M. You can guess who is our real friend. We would talk to grandpa, S.'s dad. He had a hard time until we gave him the story of another multiple's life. Both he and S. understood better, and accepted, and feeling accepted, we became safer to integrate. CHANGED? Complicated." Umm...

So, I suppose, I would have been a good candidate for a psych ward. That wasn't an option. Not after seeing what my siblings went through. Insanity wasn't an option, and suicide wasn't an option. In this fragile state, around four months after things started to cut loose, my current "wrestling partner" (I hate the word marriage I hate anything to do with marriage I don't trust institutions much, I think mostly because of the dark religion experiences) and I had a hippy partnership ceremony. This was a total 180 from, my god, now that I think about it, what a brave and radical departure; to let go of the structure of Christianity, and trust in something ineffable and universal. I asked "truth" to send a whale to the ceremony (a whale did indeed show up in the pacific waters). Our ceremony included smudging sage, walking meditations, read from Rumi, people we loved from the community read poems and writings from what felt true for them, and we didn't use words (since the process began, writing became an issue..."not safe write..no tell..bad").

We had our best friend read some sort of vows, I don't remember what, and we washed each other's feet with salt water poured from conch shells. I howled like a wolf for the "I do" part. "I guess I say this part cause it so different that what me like before when only Christian lady." (switched there-young Tiffany).

I don't remember, oh, it was pre-memory, I had been seeking my heart for what came next, and began to look at graduate school opportunities in Dance. A series of chance encounters led me to one school. I knew I needed to go there. When I went for a visit, my entire body began to shake, and I felt as if someone had plugged me into a light socket somewhere. I deferred for a year after the big earthquake. I felt too stressed, or something, and I also said no to an opportunity to perform in Prague with a performance collective I was performing with. Then the memories cut loose. So, why not, park one's rump in an art school...fuck. There is no color, sound, shape, or form, or word for this hell.

"M. go on too far with this part. We had to switch from Cynthia because

Mr. S. caretaker when we not do so good and he want M. to go to someone else. Start up with Ms. C. Now think about pretty amazing Ms. M. go to school and do her graduate work. We were many more alters; our behaviorisms were much more severe. Mr. Phillip of the M. boys' group at first no able talk..he play piano...and after two years...he start talk...his music on M. thesis tape."

Ummm, so, yes much better I think to focus on school than be in a psych ward and pour myself into my work and use that as a vehicle for metamorphosis. With regard to the other students, well lots of the other students seemed pretty whacked out as well. As soon as I arrived there I began having images of projects. Two weeks after I arrived I had a powerful vision of a film, and hooked up with a filmmaker who had a work-study job with the dance department shooting the dance departments Monday showings (I was the video TA and we shared the responsibility). "OH WE REALLY LIKE BILL!!!! B. was great, and so was R., the actress, and T. the actor." These people, hearing my story, and pouring their hearts out, and wanting to be a part of the process of making it visible in art form. Ummm...most of work push deep, like metaphor, no only like personal but dig deep, find images common ground for all beings, all people know pain. "Umm...this hard write. Very hard write. Maybe we write enough for Ms. C?"

Yeah, I'll come back to this, seems important.

Shit.. a life time.

I am kind of pissed off, being robbed of a "normal" life. Screw all of the visions, and insights, I think its bullshit, pain being a teacher. I think there are other ways to become enlightened other than torture.

All for now.

Bye.

Umm...we would like you to see our artwork.

"Did you ever see our dances? Our film? Slides of our art? We feel this tells the story best!!

go.

Thanks

Please give Maggie a bone for us and a scratch where she likes best to be scratched."

End of letter

So there – false memory syndrome? What do you think? OF COURSE NOT!

The body remembers. As previous articulated, what comes prior to a flashback could be a sensory experience, a smell even. To walk around and smell bleach and constantly ask about the smell that isn't there and then the flashback of being made to drink bleach. Or to just simply be in the therapist's office, they say nothing, but empathetically witness, watch the body convulse again and again as you recover the memory of being shocked with electricity. And then there are the drawings, from the subconscious, they tell. And the emotions, impossible I think to be sitting in an office and have someone plant something in one and feel the depth of terror or other emotions that we all relived – going into all of those rooms created to survive, getting to know so many different parts of my very fragmented self. You know Tansy, I never did send that letter to Cynthia. Life was too overwhelming back then. Much, much, much too overwhelming - and now she is dead. I wonder if her and Maggie are up above or within somewhere smiling on the process, cheering me on. I rather like that idea!

Thanks for listening Tansy!

Enough is Enough

Anne lights a match and holds the letter over the flame. A corner lights first and she drops it in the chimaera in the backyard amongst the first batch of journals she is burning. She is letting go of the past, once and for all, at least in this moment, knowing full well that she has much work left to do in her healing journey. The task to tell her story feels complete somehow although there is so much more that she could write about. She could recount the horror stories in great detail, but somehow that doesn't feel honest in the moment, others have told their stories in this way. She could write about the healing process itself, but there is not much to articulate about that. It was simple once she was in the flow, just excruciatingly painful, life threatening, and maddening. Anne harnessed the power of her lifework to work her way out of hell and now there is a body of work to show for it: over 40 works of dance and physical theater, countless drawings, paintings, sculptures, poetry, piles of journals.

Anne could share intimate details about the nature of a DID, share the journal entries written by her many aspects, share images of the art, and links to the creative work, but in the moment she lets that go. She decides not to tell it all. She still has interest in the creative process, and maybe some of this would be better expressed in Dance Theater, song, or perhaps even as a play. Anne quietly seeps back into her life as a creative embracing the flow of great

adventures unfolding beneath her path. In *the now* that great adventure is an act of mindfulness in the morning. She has a special light on and is taking in some light therapy before heading off to her day job at the law firm. The endlessly loveable piebald of a panther cat Magnolia is snuggled in her lap. She is sprawled atop the apple green cashmere blanket, and Anne strokes her lovingly while rhythmically watching the nature of her very own gift of breath, observing the rise and the fall of her belly. Anne watches her thoughts, and draws her awareness to sound, the sound of the birds with two nests alive with new life from within the two nests built in the eaves of their cottage. Anne takes a moment to appreciate the sense of taste and heat reaching for the rich cup of shade grown coffee before going back to watching her thoughts. She watches the thought “I wonder when my beloved will awaken.” Her heart leaps when she hears him rise and everyone inside begins to bounce up and down knowing in just moments they will be gifted one more chance to gaze into his loving eyes, and feel his warm embrace.

Always an Asset – Never a Liability

The Gift of Thrive, Giving Back, The Power of Corroboration, Defining the Process

Episode Three in the Patchwork Chameleon Chronicles

DEDICATION

I dedicate this section of our book, my book, Dylan's book, my parts' book to myself. All of me, all of who I am, and with this, I give...

THANKS

Anne Goes Public

Anne thought, with the second episode of the Patchwork Chameleon Chronicles she was done with telling her story. She'd lived a lifetime in the two years of processing what came up as a consequence of having the courage to chunk this project out. She found herself at a fresh place in her process and suddenly there was a profound need to tell her story publically, as Anne. Not hiding behind a pen name, or telling it abstractly, but rather, a direct telling, open and up front with her community. She sees a call put out for actors to participate in a storytelling event. Her interest is peaked.

When Anne was young, she took to acting naturally, and starred as a witch in her sixth grade play – she remembers the rush of red headed David thrusting a bouquet in her arms and telling her how convincing she was as a witch. In junior high she had a few small roles in some productions, and in high school she allowed a teacher (parts report as a perpetrator that don't want to give details – I respect that boundary) to shut her acting self down completely: telling her, that although gifted, she was too short to act. He and his wife put her in the mime troupe and her storytelling became one without words. Anne is a big proponent of going places new, always has been, always will. This quality is an innate part of her personality. She is always questing for new ways to grow as a creative as well as to grow interpersonally. She doesn't like to repeat herself but is always inventing and re-inventing herself.

When she came upon the call for submissions in her email inbox she decided to chunk something out in writing with the full intention to tell, in theatrical words, her story. Once and for all she would strip off the white face that had silenced her so many years ago. Anne decided to share her story with her community in a small, little publicized studio showing, and a colleague, BonBon, provided her with some private one on one coaching. How sensitive BonBon is! She considers Anne's entire psyche and encourages Anne to let herself be all of herself in the telling. In her professional view it makes the story telling more powerful when her alters, her parts, also speak using their personal vocal intonations, which still differs from Anne's. BonBon says the haunting quality makes the story that much more real. She conveys to Anne principles of timing and points out places where she can take a beat. The story gets sent off for consideration and Anne gives it a test drive in a public venue.

She goes public with around 15 people in the audience. It is the first time she has been public in a direct storytelling sort of way, although the Dylan aspect of her psyche has been very public in his visual art installations describing the origins of the work. Anne utterly releases to the moment. An act she is well familiar with as a performer. It is a first for some of her parts, performing. She reads a print out of her story from a stool Dylan has painted in playful colors with a black music stand before her; a shy, cold, impersonal barrier between her and the audience. Friends, her re-made family, people that

love and adore her. The pages are marked up in different colors meant to accentuate which emotional tones, or beats, or emphasis her coach has suggested.

Following is the story she shared. The last line she delivers choking back tears. Someone in the audience is choking back tears. To be loved and supported by one's tribe in such a way – what a gift!

My story

In 500 to 1500 words - a direct form of telling - publicly? Me? I think not, but in the now I find myself here, sitting on this stool, in front of you, because in the now as I write my story, I imagine myself doing so, sitting on this hand painted stool in front of you. Good evening. Welcome, so nice to see the haze of you through my nearsighted blur, having chose not to see clearly, having hid my glasses from myself, in that I think it will make this task easier, and it is simply that, a task I set for myself. I have never told my story publicly, directly, like this, and I thank you for the opportunity to share my story in a public setting.

I began on a dark and stormy night, I began as stardust, I began as rage, I began as anger, I began as hatred, I began as love, I began as a cycle. I began evading my story when I first created a split in my psyche, and split even further. I am evading the telling, because, in the now, I am not quite free from a few small things, but I have hope that this small task will help me to work through those few small things.

Truth be told, I don't think I can do this; tell you my story, I am sorry. I am too afraid. Just too afraid. I am afraid for my life, I am afraid for my siblings lives, and I am afraid that if I do tell, well, I am afraid something dreadful will happen to me and I will be abducted and murdered in a gruesome fashion, or something or someone I care about might be skinned alive, like my teddy bear, or cat, or my best friend. Any best friends out there? Beware, because I am about to launch right in and tell; and it is true, I am afraid for your life too.

Feel the fear and do it anyways, so they say, that's the saying, but I wrestle with story telling strategies, having read the counsel of a specialist in the matter, she advises, if one hold's the story such as the story I hold, unless you really, really, really feel like you should go public with your story. Don't do it.

Why?

Well, it pisses other people a part of your story off immensely for a sundry of reasons, and they will go through great effort to make your life hell if you do. So in the now, I am not in the stool in front of you, and I am where I am writing this story, sitting in a chair with my computer on my lap, and I ask

myself, do I feel like I really need to tell my story? All of who is inside of me, all of me jumps up and says YES, yes, I do, we do, all of us as one do.

Loudly, really loudly, all parts as integrating me say this, and I am a bit surprised. The surprise floats me gently back to the now to this stool, and I want to take a few deep breaths and smile at you and even invite you to breath with me, and say thank you, thank you for listening.

Tell, tell, tell, tell my story - but not just my story - but the story of other people actually, in the now, and generations before me, who most likely housed the exact same sort of terror for the exact same sort of reasons. Reasons buried deep beneath the fabric of societal denial, so I'll tell things obliquely and poetically rather than directly, it hasn't come fully to the light of societal acceptance as fact and truth yet, but it will, eventually, because I do believe light and love always triumphs in this dimension - plain, simple and true as that. Can I see a show of hands of those who believe in the power of love? Who believes in kindness? Great big bold random acts of such? Can I also see a show of hands of those of you who have stories you are afraid to tell? Any of you have secrets you are afraid of? Anyone have a skeleton or two in a broom closet in the recesses of your mind, in the marrow of your bones, in the heart of your disease?

In the now as I write I am not feeling any fear, but I do feel a boa constrictor tight grip on my brain and a genuine disability to write my story directly. "Oh just get over yourself" some part of me says. We/I am a survivor of extreme abuse and my life work seems to be, in part, about the simple act of processing the trauma, moving pass survive to thrive, and embrace the beauty of becoming an role model for others questing to heal. One CAN climb the rungs out of the hottest of hells and create relative freedom, peace, calm, and a relationship with the flow of the process.

It is not easy, I won't lie to you about that, it has its moments of unimaginable suffering, first in the initial experiencing, and then, having to re-experience it at a much later date in form of abreactions, flashbacks, scents, pains, smells, emotions. Not just once, but as many times as it takes to relive the experience from the vantage points of as many parts of the self that formed to house the horror story, some of it created through illusions, drugging, trickery, and some of it quite real, some of it, much to my surprise, dismay even, corroborated by my sister siblings.

In a recent moment, when I lay in our family hammock suspended between the magnolia tree and the plum tree, under the cool comfort of a summer evening sky, I let myself feel a degree of emotional pain so far, so deep, so wide, I thought for certain I would die from the simple act of feeling the pain. I shouted out as a croaked, rough, raw whisper, why? Why? Why do adults do evil things to small children? Why? What is the purpose of this degree of pain? What is the point?

I came to an important conclusion, for myself, my story, and the story of all children prisoners within the war camps of their own childhood, today,

yesterday, in the future, in the now - there is no point. There is nothing to be learned from experiencing extreme abuse as a child. A recent survey, the ACE study, shows that our biography becomes our biology with a host of ailments associated with early suffering. It is a complete and total and utter waste of human capital and needs to stop. Period. End of that point. I don't need to suffer to know how to be nice, share my toys, and be the change I wish for the world.

My suffering, I am convinced, began in the womb, and continued on, into my 20s from the storytelling of my many aspects and fragments of selves, before I began the journey of breaking free from my perpetrators, before I put religion, G-d, and Jesus on the shelf and began to use truth as a mantra seeking answers to questions I didn't have answers for. Somebody did, somewhere, deep inside.

Watch what you ask for. Watch what you wish for is the one solid bit of counsel that surfaces from my story. Truth be told, at times I think suicide, or sinking into a permanent psychosis might have been a smarter route, or to not be born at all, than to process, remember, re-remember, and process yet again questing for the land of health, wholeness, peace, prosperity. But that hasn't been my story. My story is the story of many who choose to quest for thrive. The body naturally wants to heal, it knows how, and if you let go, and commit to that, then it happens, and all that you need in the now to support your process, manifests. Truly, it does!

If you are a survivor of extreme abuse, if that is your story, and it is neatly tucked away somewhere, waiting to be processed, or even if you are in the throes of recovery, I want to say, if I were to do a cost/benefit analysis of the situation, and weigh the pluses and minuses of embracing the truth of my biography versus not being born, I would choose a different story. Really, I would wimp out and ask for a different story. The withered crone inside, the wise one smiles, she has no words, just imagery, and I get the impression that that might not be the case, but me, here on this stools says, yup, I would have wimped out. But, try as I can, I can't seem to sort out how to retrograde to discover myself in a different womb.

Doing another cost/benefit analysis of my biography, considering suicide or processing, I would definitely choose life because if there is even the remotest of chances that the cycle of living would spit me back into the same situation, I would not want to have to start from scratch and relive the same thing. This is my path, my story, which has not been the story of others. Others who succumbed to suicide. Victims do find the pain too much, and do take their own lives, and this ACE survey shows that childhood adversity leads to a higher risk of suicide. What about NOT remembering? What about just keeping all those skeletons in the closet. NOPE, I wouldn't choose that route either; I am a wimp when it comes to disease. I would choose to heal if I did it all over again and would live this story I am living. I would choose to not only survive, but thrive, no matter what the cost.

If you are a perpetrator of extreme trauma, if that is your story, I would like to say, on behalf of all those that have similar stories, in the now, I am free. You no longer have power and control over me. That is my story. You may think you do, you may continue to harass me, you may continue to stalk me as I sort out the haunts from the past, you may think you have power and control over me, but you don't. I am safe. I am free. I am whole. I declare it and feel it and believe it as such.

I actively go into my past of late with a great big eraser and rescue those parts of me stuck in trauma time. When I do I rewrite my story and just whisk my young selves out of the situation, so if you are looking for me there, you won't find me. I thank the other survivor who found such a tactic to be helpful, and having the courage to tell her story, her thriver tips, the relief from following these tips - simply marvelous.

I have set myself free, and am living in a big, bold, beautiful wonderful now surrounded by people who love me and actively engaged in doing things I love to do. I function well enough and have a truckload of art, dances, writing, happy adventures in my story as big, bold, beautiful facts and truths. Nobody can say, she is a psychotic broken down drug addict, homeless, addicted, her story can't be trusted, and she is far from credible. You may have wanted that for me, but it didn't happen. Nope, not even close! It is as far as the sun is from the moon, and the moon from the furthestmost star.

With that said, I know the effects of trauma, and I know many of the stories buried underneath the dirty comforter of society's collective denial quilt that impact lives which results in situations where people don't cope, they break, seemingly permanently. You might find them in psych wards, prisons, or on the streets. Some are not as fortunate as myself, and for their stories, interconnected to my own, I can touch, and feel that vast reservoir of pain that connects us, and hope as I heal, somehow, this action contributes to their recovery journey as well. Raising social awareness by story telling, telling my story, I think is a part of the solution. One more beacon of light offering a message of hope. I will myself to not only survive but also thrive. The truth, after all these years, questing it, has indeed set me free.

As I float back to the now writing on the computer, because I can't see myself saying this in the now on the stool, I write about seeing another time, with tears streaming down my cheek perhaps saying, I forgive you, I choose to send back unconditional love, not hate. I will myself to not only survive but thrive, and own in the moment that now that the hugeness of the terror has abated, extreme terror being an appropriate response to extreme abuse, I ride the tide of the extreme rage and let it be a cleansing heat and use it to fuel the visions of the positive things in my life and give myself permission to sprout wings of joy, laughter, love, celebration. I embrace the winds of change and ground into the new words that come to me, now that the truth has set me free.

I love you, I am sorry, please forgive me thank you.

May you be well, may you be happy, may you be whole, may you be healed.

See me thrive, I have survived.

That is my story.

I didn't expect to write another episode of the Patchwork Chameleon Chronicles – truly, but in this very moment I boldly step out of 3rd person as Anne and into M. While the Dylan aspect openly expresses who he is, I hide behind the first initial of my legal name, somewhat in denial that given the story, anyone who really wanted to figure out who I am, can. The perpetrators are very aware of who I am, I know and get that now. Why should only they know? That doesn't make sense to me.

Safety, this remains a concern. If I bump up the telling, might this bump up the nuisances I experience? Why more telling? Why direct telling. Dylan's view is that the best place to hide is in plain sight, and the more people who know my story, the safer I will be. He reminds me “we” are a super competent, super able, super communicative, super accepting integrated Multifaceted Wonder Order team – rough about the edges, but basically complete. We are aware, as a happy community, of the work that is left to be done, but there is time enough for that!

Stepping out of 3rd person and owning that I as M., am just a part in the big picture of who I am. To respect that other parts need to tell what they need to tell to get it out of our shared body. I, as M., fully get that part of this journey is giving expression to all of who I am. These parts also need me, as a main front part, to be a voice for our totality. I get that these parts are me, even though we seem so very different from each other.

I own, and know intellectually, that in order for me to have developed a Multifaceted Wonder Order, significant stuff went down. It still feels like a cross between a Dali painting and a Fellini movie – but this is my past, which I can't change, so I may as well embrace it: the good, the bad, the ugly, the indifferent, and all the shades and nuances with and without color, shape, sound, or form in-between. My parts' stories and reports are me, my stories. Additionally, I can't imagine not honoring the other parts I came to know when processing the layer of trauma that surfaced as a consequence of having the courage to write the first two episodes. I never would have grown aware of a new baby alter, depicted below in a drawing by Dylan. Or perhaps it is the same baby alter that went to sleep when I shoved my parts all down under and numbed myself with pharmaceutical medication under the care of my first psychiatrist and she just now felt safe enough to come out, share, integrate. To become aware, to grow in awareness, this is ultimately my journey, and I gladly embrace it – relish it, cherish it even.



baby alter – by Dylan

Chapter One: That Final Layer

Stepping out of Third Person as Anne and into 1st Person as M. Counting My Many Blessings!

In this episode of the Patchwork Chameleon Chronicles I emerge out of the third person, as the aspect of the system that had no conscious awareness of the trauma, and was represented as *Anne* in the Patchwork Chameleon Chronicles' first two episodes. Anne, short for the triggering birth name that I shed, Annette. I would encourage any survivor of extreme abuse to change their legal name if you find you hate your birth name, or that it makes you incredibly uncomfortable. Some may not know why, while others are fully aware why – at any rate, it is extremely empowering to do so.

Taking on a memoir project is extremely powerful. I always knew there was “one last layer” to process, and I feared it might be the end of me. Now that my system has processed that final layer, I get that fear. I don't think I could have gotten through this safely without the advancement in the field that had occurred since I first began processing. During this final layer I also gained a degree of stability where I felt as if I could reach out to the one sister who had been too destabilizing to talk to. My first sister had recanted some of what she told me and I was still longing for corroboration. Eventually we exchanged notes about our respective perceptions about our childhood, and the power of corroboration enabled me to let go even further. I was able to own the fullness of my story in a way I would not have been able to without corroboration.

As I wrap up this particular book project I honor, I am still in process, and in process, I feel as if it really doesn't get much better than the life I now have. No, I'm not rich, and it continues to be an interesting puzzle to get my work as an artist out into the world. I've had some wonky health issues this year ranging from a brain aneurysm repair, diagnosed with GERD, bursitis, a torn retina, laser surgery, and recently a vitreous hemorrhage. My physical body was so sick 9 months ago I thought I was going to die. I did my research, got some counsel out of network, and have been having at the issue treating a “probable” tick infection from dancing in loose clothing in Connecticut. My symptom list has gone from two pages long to a short paragraph. My life is radically different as a consequence of the health challenges and I embrace the simplicity of a two-part focus. Good nutrition in, toxins out. I could have easily died from the brain aneurysm and had made my peace with my indefinable, indescribable, unknowable maker. I thought I was done. But apparently I wasn't, I'm back, and as I questioned why I was back, completing this story became a part of the big picture: that, and a little bit at a time, reaching out to my sister. Being persistent with my niece about getting her the support and services she needs knowing full well it isn't my job to fix her.

I am aware that there may be aspects in me that are not connected directly to this complicated integrated network of a system that embodies my conscious awareness in that there are little signs that seem as if I may still be losing time, like going to bed with my shirt right side out, and waking up with it on inside out. Or, being in the car with my beloved, engaged in conversation, and him asking me, do you realize that I have turned the air conditioning off three times, and you have reached to turn it right back on? – no, I wasn't aware, and I am curious about that.

The night before last, the smell of burnt toast awoke me in the middle of the night. There was no toast burning, but I remembered, that often times I would have the somatic memory or sensory awareness before a flashback. So I tell myself, okay, show me burnt toast – and I remember an art project where a figure burning toast was integrated into the scene. Some part was telling abstractly, perhaps the time to understanding directly was surfacing. Of late I have been affirming, don't give me the impulse to pick a fight in my mind's eye, give the experience that causes me to seek to protect myself in this way. When I feel this texture, I look inward and send love to the pocket of my psyche that sends up these protective mechanisms and ask, please, this hurts the body, these feelings, let's have loving, happy, peaceful feelings.

In the present flow there is enough strength and connection amongst all of who I am in my rich outer life, and inner life, that I simply affirm "I am whole." Also, in this moment, the terror is gone. I even managed to sleep soundly all alone with the cat when my spouse was out of town. Mind you, I did block the doors with chairs, but I slept – peacefully, with no sleep aides, pharmaceutical OR natural.

No, I am not a fused personality state, and although all aspects, including me as M., express this seems like a good goal, I am realistic about the possibilities. From the research and reading I have done, it seems as if the greater degree of fragmentation one has experienced, the less likely it is that an integrated multiple (I still prefer this term to DID) will achieve a fused personality state. My fragmentation was extensive; 70 or more parts and splinters and bits and pieces, hence, it isn't likely we will achieve a fused state. I am always me, but there are moments, that being one collated team of sub-parts is strikingly different in terms of interest, and views than another conglomerate. It truly feels like a very different orbit: many selves sharing one body orbiting in their own distinctive galaxy. I wonder if it is even possible for these different states of consciousness to merge as one.

I am so curious about this. I continue to switch, but switching is less often in relation to stress, but more in relation to adventure play, enjoyment, living life to the fullest. Dylan for instance was out an entire weekend away for camping, kayaking, snorkeling, and he always seems to take control of the body on camping adventures, and during travels as well. He loves to fly and never balks at striking up conversations and being open with our life story. The aspect of me that loves to tidy cleans up my messes, once called Mr.

Clean, is out daily and actually seems to be fused with me as M. The aspect that likes to get excited and say “nyah, nyah, nyah, nyah” in a growly sort of way is out now on my lunch breaks to walk the dog expanding his play beyond the cat. When I am fatigued, or sick, or focused on some life task or crisis (such as this recent vitreous hemorrhage) and not relaxed, this part isn’t out as much. This part feels connected most to Dylan. This part also comes out in dance rehearsals when the group is having a lot of fun, and the dancers in the community now make his funny “nyah, nyah, nyah” sound and join in on the antics. I observe when we do go to the Ophthalmologist, and the Dr. in his white coat is testing us, the parts that were trained to be dyslexic begin to do the opposite of what he directs. Look this way, we look a different way, and we answer in opposites. As soon as I observe this I send calming thoughts to this pocket of my psyche and direct, we don’t need to respond in this way any more. You don’t need to be afraid. He isn’t going to hurt us. New jobs, new tasks, new adventures as the underbelly of who I am steps out from the shadows into the light of day and finds safe and productive and fun ways to engage in day to day living. Nobody seems to notice the switches in my states of being, except perhaps in ceramics classes, Dylan’s turf.

I work with images of late of all parts of my brain lighting up at once, and being all of me at once, having discovered a scientific article that suggests that the brain activity of different “parts” of a system light up differently with neuroimaging. As Dylan does my mind light up one way, as M. does it light up another, as my other parts, does it light up yet another?

I also work with the image of all of who I am as a beautiful garden. A rose is a rose, a magnolia blossom is a magnolia blossom, a daffodil is a daffodil, and in any given moment, why, I might simply be a rose – or, perhaps a rose mixed with Peruvian lilies and asters, and in rare moments, the bulk of all flowers that express in my outer garden as well as in my inner garden. A recent visit with a colleague, post rehearsal, we chatted into the wee hours of the morning, and she offered her perspective that this is it, I’m done, I’m whole, and right now, in present time, I am shifting to let go of this chapter of my journey – which is a lovely external affirmation. She offered that it might be tempting to go back into it, and that my task is to stay focused on leaving it behind. That it is done. The biggest chunk of healing is behind me. In this moment, it feels like it, but in another moment, I get, it might not. It may take a few years to truly get that my healing work is done. Fall has arrived with a long string of trigger times to follow on into January. This will be a true test of where I am at in that often times I associate this with the season of misery, depression, agitation, anxiety, unraveling, and fear.

This faith and confidence serves to toss an anchor into the future, into potential, an umbilical chord that connects to the fully realized self, ever growing, expanding, deepening and widening within awareness. In this state of perceived wellness I continue on with the fine-tuning of my vessel, which holds the potential to be a journey full of growth for the duration of my life. I

fully own, that I may be in process until the day I die, that expanding awareness is a life work for me, and as I become more aware, my fantasy is that I contribute to nurturing global poetic wonder, harmony, and safety.

I welcome parts that may be left to surface to conscious awareness and welcome any bits and pieces that seek to be brought into the light for examination, exploration, release, and integration. Of late I finally fully understand that I have parts that just hold emotion and have given attention to this. I've always felt this texture, but didn't get the connection that they were distinct parts of my psyche seeking to be integrated into my totality. They present as vast pools of emotion that have not yet been fully drained, and perhaps may never be fully released: there is a part that is all pain, one that is all sorrow, one that is all anger.

What helps most when they are in the front space is to sing. On the way to work this morning a melody emerges and I find myself singing *all my pain drains* and improvise vocally what comes up and wants to be expressed. I feel energy draining out the bottom of my feet as I walk, the way a dancer feels such things.

For the moment, my past does not get in the way of me living an extraordinary life, and living out my dreams, and this to me is wellness/wholeness. When I consider the lives of friends, I get that I have accomplished a great deal, and have achieved a wide, broad, full realization of my talents. My condition, this Multifaceted Wonder Order, I own, has been a distinctive asset rather than a liability. True, at times the journey has been debilitating, but within these states, there was always forward flow, intention, questing wholeness, seeking answers, and of late, the lovely textures of gratitude and grace that has helped me cope with the horror of the journey.

Colleagues often ask me, how do you do it? You are so prolific. I think this is the gift of my Multifaceted Wonder Order, the flip side of torture with regard to the survival skills I developed in response. I simply wonder if, each time the psyche sub-divides, and creates new neural pathways it would not have otherwise, if this just makes for MORE rather than LESS with regard to cognitive, spiritual, soulful, and creative resources to work with. I think an added factor is how I used staying busy as a coping mechanism, and a place to escape from processing, and also a means to pace the flow of recovery as well, pacing it out over a now 23 plus year stretch.

My present focus is, as the part in the system that has been awake in every day life most often, to continue to let go of control and allow myself to be all of me, which really, is much about stepping into joy, and living a more balanced life valuing love, friendship, relationships, and simplicity. It is also much about re-balancing how much effort is given to the many different things my system enjoys doing. At this point, I would like to tell, in first person, what I encountered when processing this final layer of trauma. It feels necessary, to add to the body of existing stories told by other survivors embracing thrive; the very stories and tips that enabled me to process. I am

compelled to tell in the same way I was once compelled to dance and observe, that NEED to dance and to choreograph no longer exists. I am curious about that and am willing to let go, shift, morph, evolve. Writing becomes my dance in this moment – but as I come back to this – it is a NEW moment, as this writing project comes to a close, I feel that surge and urge and need and hunger to dance come back to me. That is the way of the multi-disciplinary visionary, breathing between mediums of expression.

Back in Therapy

When first seeking to get my rump back in therapy my system was “flooded” and I struggled fiercely to hang on while searching for support. The terror was so intense I feared breaking into psychosis from the stress and used the PRN (per requested need) I had on hand for insomnia that was also an anti-psychotic. I also used all of the other tools in my toolkit to hang on and gave abundant thanks for my intuition as well as for the plethora of free resources on the internet: shamanic drumming, a reboot your brain series, EMDR, EFT, TAT, guided meditation sessions, guided mindfulness sessions, sound healing, positive affirmations, my creative tools - painting, sculpting, drawing, movement, journaling, and burning sage.

I knew this time around I couldn’t go to an intern at the low cost therapy clinic across the street from my workplace. I just knew I needed to find someone skilled, rather, Dylan (whom I gave the name Dymond in the Patchwork Chameleon Chronicles) did. It was this aspect that took charge and took direct right action. I took some time off from work to focus on regaining stability and finding a skilled therapist. I started with calling one of the local counseling services I had used before for couples counseling. The director of the program recommended me to a woman who was supposed to be amazing, who teaches at a local college. I successfully set up an appointment, which in and of itself is a great feat when a system is flooded, and met with the therapist. Fifteen minutes into telling her “my story”, cold, clinical, devoid of emotion, she interrupted me. She handed me back my check and expressed “I’m sorry, I can’t help you, and I don’t know of anyone in our community who can. Find a somatic therapist.” One of my sisters, a decade ago, had encouraged me to find a somatic therapist – that was her path – but my system wasn’t ready then for processing this layer. All in good time, all in our own time as survivors questing thrive. I honor that each journey back to wholeness is its own journey, and what works for one, may very well not work for another.

I called my insurance company and asked for a list of therapists and went through the list. I digress to say, I am so grateful for this insurance company, they have been so amazing in this journey, and also with recent health challenges. Several therapists didn’t return my call, or respond to forms submitted to their websites, and the one that did get back to me didn’t feel qualified. I paid out of pocket to counsel with one therapist who was listed on

a trauma specific support website as someone who treated DID. When I described a bit of what was happening she expressed that perpetrators, when they get wind of a survivor being vocal about their journey (which I had in way of writing and self-publishing my memoir), they come out of the woodworks to intentionally trigger the survivor. Her professional view added to the terror I was experiencing.

She offered, that given my description of what was happening, this was occurring to me. She advised me to quit my job. I needed my job! I told her I needed health insurance to get treatment for the PTSD. The whole system of who I am decided that although this woman probably understood the situation well, it wasn't the best match. We even went as far to contact the referring agency and voice our concern about this woman's counsel. I had no choice but to stay put and work through the challenges surfacing for me. I chose not run. I chose to face my terror. I needed help; I needed health insurance to pay for the help, so I chose to err on the side of optimism. I framed what was happening to me as experiences skewed by the highly charged nature of new information/stories/parts surfacing to be integrated. It was the right choice.

I contacted a friend who worked in the mental health industry, and she inquired of her organization. She provided me with a referral for a somatic therapist who practiced an hour drive away from me. She was out of network. I cajoled and badgered my insurance company and told them I wasn't able to find a qualified therapist in network, or in my town that would take me on as a client. I told them I desperately needed support for my PTSD flare-up. Miracle of all miracles, they said yes, and I began a weekly drive to meet with her.

The difficult work began.

As expressed earlier, it was the Dylan aspect of who I am that took on finding a therapist, and it was this aspect that was typically most active in the session in terms of negotiating with the new aspects that surfaced and managed the pacing of the process. Dylan was growing up. It took two years before I as M. showed up regularly. I, who was the main front part for over 30 years of my life, began to show up in therapy with this new therapist, S., just three months ago – two and a half years into our process together. Presently there is balance in our sessions between expressing as M., expressing as Dylan, and also, expressing as other parts with Jacob and his integrated band wanting to have an active “outer” life as well and not feeling as if they have a safe place to come out other than in therapy – not feeling welcome in my relationship with my spouse (understandable given he once told them they were not welcome in the relationship. Gosh that sounds mad!)

The first session I brought a complete record of my psychiatric files and handed them over to my therapist. After reviewing my files she expressed that it was her view that my care was not being managed appropriately. She was like a dog with a bone hounding me to seek out a new psychiatrist each time

we worked together. It took a few months, but I finally did, and that made a HUGE difference. I had argued and argued and argued with my first long-term psychiatrist that a proper diagnosis was really important, and he countered, it didn't matter. I countered back, if my general practitioner were to diagnosis me with liver disease, and treated that when I had heart disease instead of liver disease, that would VERY MUCH matter. He refused to buy into it. He prescribed meds based on his thought that I was bi-polar, with PTSD, and a diagnosis of dissociative identity non-specified.

I brought in a book written by a psychiatrist who treats DID and asked about further screening of my condition. He told me he was too busy to read. He had also advised me to stop therapy, and wanted to treat me only using medications, indicating he thought I had done enough therapy. In my files, he never made a note that he directed me to stop therapy, but I remember this quite distinctly. I had read a memoir of someone with bi-polar and I knew this was not my story and continued to hound him about the diagnosis.

As a dancer, I listen to my body, and it was very clear about when it was time to wean off of meds. I successfully weaned off all of the psychiatric medication (a two year process), but kept something on hand for sleep disturbances, which doubled as something to stave off psychosis. One of the medications, Lamictal, I correlated with suppression of my sub-selves. It took two years to wean off this medication. Once off this, I began to find myself more in touch with all of who I am. My mood remained stable. A period of four years passed with no drastic mood swings. No manic episodes, no symptoms one would associate with a bi-polar diagnosis. There were moments of great excitement, but I associate that now with moments of what I call creative genius, a part of my creative process. It was a part of my "artist temperament", not mental illness.

This notion of creative genius is a relatively new understanding to me, and it came when I was undergoing that recent brain aneurysm repair, when I was reduced to my body breathing, parked in stillness, watching my breath for insight, stress relief, and entertainment even. In this state I discovered the beauty of my mind. A little "aha" blossomed. I felt an urge to own that my greatest gift was NOT my creative ability, but my mind. At this time, in exchange for my sense of an extended life, I contracted to live life with gratitude and grace, and to take better care of my physical body as a sacred container of consciousness.

In my experience, the cycle of creative genius begins with curiosity. It is a simple act, to become aware of curiosity, and a fun release to quest inquiry. One falls into the quest, are drawn into it, into that place where one feels no sense of time passing, and there is deep interest in what it is that you are experiencing. I revisited this the other day when picking up a book in my spouse's office. I believe it probably relates to what is next on the vision plate. My whole body seemed to resonate and I felt infinitely expansive. It is a very specific texture/dynamic. There were no edges. It was boundary less. I have

since to return to the book – but I know it is there for me – waiting. Sometimes it works that way. The seed drops, and you may tend to it immediately. Other times it lies dormant, and waits.

My sense is, with thought, that we have established ways of thinking and perceiving that helps us to organize our reality and function in life: some which is taught, some which is discovered. If there is something flickering in one's minds eye, a curiosity, a texture, a dynamic, a subtle nuance that may or may not have a fierce passion connected to it; it is uncharted territory from your perspective. In order to flesh out what it is beneath or within or beyond what has captivated you, it takes dedicated/concentrated/playful/curious exploration and great diligence. This is the start.

When one becomes curious about something, and begins to seek, quest even, you are drawn to certain material to read, or things might draw your attention on the Internet, or on the bookshelf at a bookstore, or at the library. You begin the research and information gathering process and have at devouring existing literature on the topic, or related topics, or tangential things.

You find yourself writing your questions down, and there is something about writing them down that brings the quest into the manifestation you are abiding, and it becomes an explorative, tangible substance alive in your day to day living. It begins to consume every waking hour – and likely ones dreamspace.

Synchronistic chance encounters begin to occur that affirm you are headed in the right direction, the information you are seeking just randomly seems to be drawn to you, you come across something written by someone who is an expert, or world renowned that confirms what you've come to understand on your own. There is a process of digesting all you have gathered. You find yourself testing things out, trying thing son for size, realigning, re-testing, trying again, shedding – and there is seemingly no direct straightforward path, but an intuitive path within the chaos.

At some point in the journey a spark occurs, that moment of creative genius when a download of new information comes in and the mind begins to fire rapidly. The sense I make out of it is that it is as if new tracks are being laid down, new synapses fired, something in the brain itself shifts, and the place the information is coming from is LARGER than oneself, a conduit direct into the heart of mystery unfolding in the moment you are channeling/sourcing/collating/birthing the fresh information. Ones thoughts are OUTSIDE of the well-established channels of thoughts laid down from pre-existing knowledge in your system.

Perhaps this is the “god particle” that exists in humanity. You scrawl and scribble the ideas down about whatever happens to be close at hand and as you write them down another part of you is passing judgment saying, that is a crazy thought, crazy yes because it isn't a thought that runs along the well rooted and established network of information processing that is safe, tried,

true, reliable, socially acceptable. There is a sense of danger, edginess, but one feels quite safe, an internal calm even within the eye of your creative storm. When the moment has passed – it is birthed– something utterly new to you to consider and you may either have your answer, or a stepping-stone or puzzle piece relevant to your quest.

These inspired moments, they feel a bit like madness and there is a great deal of excitement and energy. At other times, when questing a particular thing, the new thought may just blossom seemingly out of nowhere, like a tulip pushing through the earth you expected to find a turnip coming out of. Sometimes you can feel them emerging – I used to tell my spouse; I can feel a new thought coming in for a landing. At other times, they just emerge, seemingly out of nowhere. So, it feels appropriate here to mention, that the creative temperament, in those moments of creative genius sparking, it may appear “manic.” I bring this up because I think, in part, the first psychiatrist was mis-interpreting periods of work excitement and great creativity as “manic.” That, and just the times when I was triggered and not aware that I was in need of processing what was coming up.

Finding a new psychiatrist constituted a big shift and a gigantic step in the awesome direction of completing the care team I needed to get through this last layer of trauma. My diagnosis shifted to PTSD with Depressive episodes, Anxiety, Panic, and a Dissociative Identity Disorder. My whole system sighed with relief, YES; this is the framework to work with! The psychiatrist also took the view that meds are used to treat the symptoms of PTSD, but they are not the cure, for this I needed therapy and he advised meeting once a week with the woman I had found. I was given something to have as a PRN for panic attacks and anxiety, and I also continued the prescription for an anti-psychotic as a PRN for sleep and to help when my system was flooded. It helped managed both the terror and the distorted thinking and feelings of paranoia that went with. Tough stuff, really, really, really tough stuff. The first layer I had begun to process over two decades earlier was tough, and this layer, was tough in an entirely different sort of texture. The primary difference being, I managed to stay grounded, functional, and build on the strength of what 20 years into the healing journey had brought about. The way I processed the body memories was different, which was due to the advancement in the field of treating trauma.

The first part of the journey there were some 35 parts/splinters/fragments to my system, although, in reviewing my journals, I think there may have been much more. When I had this “forced integration” of sorts, brought on by circumstances and a different action plan prescribed by my then psychiatrist, as well as using sheer will power, I did not realize that there was other levels in my system and that there was much more brought to conscious awareness. I had from time to time checked in with a counselor, and the feedback I received is that she perceived me as healthy neurotic person. I was making great strides professionally as an artist passionate about building community

and I had been at the same place of employment for a decade. The one area of difficult was in relation to my spouse.

At this new stage in my process I desperately needed affirmation, information, and validation about what was surfacing. I needed fresh eyes and new perspectives from a care team. I changed my general practitioner at this time as well. I also needed support with regard to how to cope with some of the truly bizarre events occurring in my life. The time had come for shedding the *mind control* layer of trauma.

I sought out an online support community of other survivors and settled on joining *Ivory Garden*. It took about a week to get enrolled because each time I attempted to, I became so discombobulated I couldn't function to figure out how to sign up. It was here that I met others who had experienced the same things and they shared with me their tips about how they managed to process and cope. I could NOT have gotten through this layer without the counsel and advice from survivors within this community. Let me repeat, I could NOT have processed this layer without support from others who had similar life experiences and were further along in the healing journey. I also could NOT have gotten through this layer without professional support and the use of medication. I think this is a primary impetus for sharing my experiences. Perhaps something in my story will be to someone else not as far along in their process as I am what others have been to me. My way of giving back to the community, a community I do not engage with much, and this choice has been one of wanting to keep myself safe. I thought to myself, if I were a perpetrator, I would definitely scope out online places, so I had a basic mistrust of group scenes: offline and online. I used the resource to go in, connect, and get the support I needed, and leave when I began to feel unsafe. Always prioritizing with feeling and being safe.

One individual in the *Ivory Garden* recommended the book *The Gift of Fear* by Gavin de Becker, which helped me immensely with regard to the terror and feeling unsafe. I was prompted to ask for support after one particular experience. I remember pulling over in a parking lot because I sense I was being followed. I got out of the car and observed a car stop and someone got out of the car and opened his trunk. I stood my ground and watched this person. They did not take anything out of the trunk, but just stood their watching me watching them. I wondered what was in the trunk, and why, they would pull up in the middle of a lane in a parking lot, not a parking space, open their trunk as if they were going to reach for something and watch me. The few minutes seemed like a lifetime. This person eventually closed the trunk of their car and drove off. I thought I would die in that moment from the terror and I wondered if they had a gun in their trunk and I was their target. I needed to be able to manage this terror, to manage the distorted thinking, and also to know how to sense if I was truly in danger. The body always knows – if one listens. Gavin de Becker's book taught me the power of listening to my intuition, learning to discern when the body is truly

in danger or not, and to move beyond denial so my intuition can work more effectively. I realized I was doing much of this already. For anyone with parts reading this, TRUST YOUR PARTS! It may seem crazy in the moment, but if you suddenly feel unsafe, take action to generate safety. It can be as simple as moving to a different table at a coffee shop, or leaving altogether.

Another individual at *Ivory Garden*, when I described feeling as if I was being specifically triggered by people coming around my neighborhood, told me what she would do is create a hand gesture that meant to her, go away. She would quietly use the gestures if this came up for her. I acted on this counsel with a person in a van outside of our house. I had had several instances of people who didn't live in our neighborhood driving in our neighborhood and using what my system interpreted as "get in the car" signals. I directed these gestures at the man in the van, and he watched me. I then began to say, "Go away, I'm safe" gradually getting louder. This individual began to mimic me and say "go away, go away, I'm safe" in a way a small child might mimic another child to irritate them. He finally drove off. After that incident, I did not have any more of what I called "pick up" trigger cues. My psychiatrist at that time advised to NOT ENGAGE or react in situations like this. In my experience, it was empowering, and the apt thing to do in the moment, and the end result was – this activity stopped (for the most part.) I did however decide to avoid any direct confrontations when triggered or when parts were reporting they felt unsafe, or, if my natural body instincts were communicating to me, d a n g e r, d a n g e r, a red hot beacon of warning – I listened.

Awareness that bubbled up from my consciousness in its many fragmented bits and pieces was that I had been trained to respond to various signals to switch into different alters. One bit was training to switch parts into perpetrator loyal aspects to be driven to a nefarious underworld of horrific happenings. With this layer of knowledge sheer terror was associated with the surfacing and telling of this knowledge. I had grown to a point where I had both the skills and resources to stave off psychosis. It was January 2013 when I asked for a revelation behind what was behind the terror: January, a month that had always been difficult for me; it is also a difficult month for one of my sister's. Eventually what was behind the terror surfaced. Some part offered the memory of a time when she was used as bait to lure a runaway into the car, and putting a white cloth with some substance on it to cause the victim to go unconscious. I had had this memory before, offered by another aspect, but there wasn't the terror associated with it. Waves of terror came up with the waves of new information. There was one period in this last layer where I experienced a solid month of feeling terror non-stop. I even went as far as to schedule an appointment with my GP to see if there was something organically wrong with my body that had caused me to be permanently stuck in this state. It was completely un-natural this terror, I knew it was not normal, and I also knew something significant was up.

During this time there was the compounded stress of my beloved, of then 24 years, communicating he was not sure he wanted to be with me any more. We were back to where we were when we separated 10 years prior. He communicated that he thought my life experiences, the shadow aspects, were a string of delusions. He attempted to plaster the label “delusionary” on my forehead. My therapist invited him in to discuss my diagnosis. He set a boundary and said no. I invited him to meet my psychiatrist, and again, he said no. His diagnosis was his diagnosis, and a man with no medical degree chose to disavow the framework my care team was working with and choose a story that resonated with him as most plausible; the dark side of my relationship of now 26 years. I researched the meaning of delusionary in that an important part of my process has been to take in feedback from others. I researched how it relates in the field of psychiatry, and concluded, this is not me, this is **not** my picture. This did not take away the excruciating pain of one’s life mate disavowing one’s personal experience as well as the diagnoses provided by one’s therapist and psychiatrist. All survivors I think want to be heard and their stories honored and believed. To him, my flashbacks were all delusions. A friend pointed out that this is probably how he copes with the horror, and, in some odd way - this makes sense to me. I coped by subdividing. He doesn’t have this option. I get now, that perhaps this is his story, what he tells himself in order to be able to cope with being in a relationship with me. We’ve since sorted our differences out, and are back at connection after a cycle of disconnection, but this giant gap exists between us of how we experience our respective life experiences.

Truth be told, I, as M., cognitively understand that in order for me to have developed a Dissociative Identity Disorder, significant crap went down, but I can’t for the life of me really get that this happened to me. Even after 23 plus years of processing portions of my life suspend with an unreal otherworldliness like a Dali painting, or a Fellini film, which probably accounts for my fascination with these artists - their orbits defining my reality. I am sure I am repeating myself about this and I am curious about that.

With regard to the fear, the specific things that helped with the terror, in addition to Gavin’s book, are as follows. When my system was flooded, before I was re-connected to therapy, I used grounding tools, not really knowing they were grounding tools. If you are a survivor and haven’t learned any grounding tools, and have access to the Internet, simply enter grounding tools PTSD and enjoy what you discover! At that time I was taking a stone carving class, and there was something glorious about the repetitive nature of chipping away at the stone, then sanding. In the rhythm of this activity I overlaid positive affirmations. With each chip, or sanding motion, I’d affirm what came up, healing in my spirit, healing in my soul, healing in my mind, healing in my body – or, wholeness in my spirit, wholeness in my soul, wholeness in my mind, wholeness in my body. Whatever bubbled up as supportive, I flowed with that meditation.

I played sounds that supported me as I worked, and used intuition to choose what worked and harmonized with where I was spiritually in that I believe some layers of trauma affect the soul/spiritual dimension of the human condition. What drew me at that time were native American Indian drumming, shamanic drumming, the Ganesh obstacle breaking mantra, spiritual protection and spiritual clearing affirmations – all of which I found as free resources posted to YouTube. I burned sage in a Tibetan bowl and *smudged* my body. I also walked around the perimeter of our entire house with the sage and consciously cleared the space *smudging* the periphery. I ventured to the local store that sells healing support tools and began to work with rocks for different purposes. I chose something for protection as well as something that was supposed to send the negative energy back to the sender in that I felt I needed protection. It worked to help create a greater degree of feeling safe within my system. I also purchased some protective scented “angel” spray after testing several types of spray and would use the scent to ground me. The rocks I put in my pillow at night, and carried in a small pouch I had knitted that I could wear around my neck, and wear close to my heart tucked in my bra. I was determined to hang on. At nighttime I listened to sleep meditations that made me feel safe and used an EFT tapping meditation that calls on guardian angels for support. Louise Hay’s meditation for self-love was very helpful and at one point in my journey, I listened to it every night for three months straight. I was determined to **not** let my body descend into a psychosis. When my system was flooded I used a small dose of the anti-psychotic, 12.5 – 25 mg., which ensured I slept and also ensured that the door to the rabbit hole/psychosis remained firmly shut.

When the terror came up, paranoia and distorted thinking also came up, and I recognized that it was possible, from this point of departure, to descend further into psychosis. I researched paranoia and realized this was related to PTSD. I was aware that I had aspects of me trained to go into psychosis and I thought to begin to challenge myself. Every time the paranoia, or distorted thought came up, I would say, “don’t give me the paranoia, give me the memory, the cause behind this.” I was persistent, very persistent, and with time, the flashback/memory would surface, and with it, a clear understanding WHY one would choose to stave off processing the information by descending into psychosis – to escape the horror of what was the root of the abject terror. I also began to challenge and dissect the distorted thinking and would use my rational mind to ground into the actuality of what was actually happening. With time the paranoia became a thing of the past. When I brought to conscious awareness what was behind it all, and processed the unprocessed trauma, then the old haunts dissipated. I came to an impasse in therapy when some of what wanted to be processed couldn’t be processed in a somatic therapy sort of way.

At this time I was introduced to a book called *Coping with Trauma Related Dissociation*. It was impossible at first to open up. My therapist

suggested just bringing it to a session, and we worked with simply opening it during my therapy sessions. We also worked with my parts feeling safe in her office: asking her to remove a rosary from out of site, looking in cabinets, under her desk for recording devices, removing the ticking clock on occasion, asking about different objects in the office, looking outside and checking what cars were parked in the lot, asking about the planes and helicopters flying overhead. I attempted to work through the workbook on my own at home, but I was not able to really ground into the exercises well. My muse was taking me down a different path for processing what was coming up, as was the wonder of somatic therapy. In the past, when I began to spontaneously process the trauma, there was a full reliving of the hell. I discovered with somatic therapy one didn't have to relive the whole entire horror in its fullest intensity. I learned skills of being 90% present and connected to the moment, and focused on what sensations I could find in my body that felt supported, while the nervous system healed/recovered. The moments I couldn't find a single supported, comforted, safe space in my body I focused on what felt nice, like stroking my hair, or the texture of the couch under my fingers. I reveled in the wonder of it, and thought, how much quicker my process might have been the first ten years of processing the trauma if I had support with use of this style of healing from trauma – it didn't exist then. When it came to the mind-control layer a different approach was needed and the process adjusted. I took to research and reading and gained support from a therapist in Southern California who I came across when I discovered something called the West Coast Trauma Project. After listening to her on a West Coast Trauma Project podcast I reached out to her for support and information. She suggested two books: *Ritual Abuse and Mind Control: The Manipulation of Attachment Needs*, and *Becoming Yourself, Overcoming Mind Control and Ritual Abuse*. She also indicated she would be a resource to my therapist if necessary.

My therapist was amazing. She admitted she knew nothing about mind control. Dylan was able to communicate that in order for her and our system to be able to continue to work together she would need to educate herself, and she did! A brilliant illustration that clients learn and grow from their therapists, and therapists, in turn learn and grow from what their clients ask for and need. The style flowed in a different direction for a bit. I worked with the information I gleaned from the books and together we sorted out how to work through the tough stuff. I could not have gotten through this hoop of processing if it had not been for this person, Ellen Lacter, pointing me in the right direction with regards to information, the books, the lessons from others. The universe supported me in my healing journey. What I needed in the moment ALWAYS manifest - some wonderful beautiful mysterious expression of magical restorative energy.

The significant key in this layer was the importance of allowing the system to flow back and forth between being present with the trauma and processing it in a way that one processes it with somatic therapy, and knowing

when aspects needed to communicate with speech what was going on, our what was surfacing to be processed, integrated, and released. It is the safe container of therapy coupled with the wisdom courageously shared by other survivors, and their pioneering efforts in sharing how they coped, that provided me with a framework to safely and effectively process in therapy, as well as in life - when issues surfaced to be processed in-between sessions.

For surfacing material, and aspects, I created a safe place in my inner world and the information would be taken here for safekeeping by something I created within my imagination. It was at this point in my journey that I realized that being sub-divided was a rich experience of having aspects of the sub-divided self that lived within an inner world, and aspects of the self that engaged with the world in an outer – external way: innies and outies (like belly buttons some playful part offers.)

Alison Miller, in her book *Becoming Yourself, Overcoming Mind Control and Ritual Abuse*, advises not telling anyone of the internal system, not even your therapist, so I kept this process to myself. There was also counsel to relocate aspects of the self in the psyche from where and how they were stored. For instance, I had a set of around 12 sub-parts that were stored in my psyche in a school bus, and I imagined relocating them to a place I had associated with a lot of positive memories. As new groups of aspects of myself surfaced, they were also moved to this favored vacation place. What was fascinating to me is the discovery that my psyche would continue to work and re-organize on a level that I wasn't consciously aware of. When I checked back with a new aspect to move to the internal play place, I discovered the place had moved and the psyche had create a place that felt even safer for my internal parts. For aspects that were loyal to the perpetrators I created a healing and re-education center inside and sent these aspects there – to a beautiful room in my imagination deep in the earth full of healing gemstones. Gradually a sense of inner calm began to pervade and I learned to recognize when something was up, and would take the time to journal.



Journal entry showing “twinning” type of programming

The act of writing, and telling, in my experience was a crucial component of taking the system’s power back. If I was in a work situation, and was suddenly triggered, I would pull out my notebook and allow the part triggered to write out what was going on, and what the trigger meant to this part. Or, we would write it out and journal as soon as we got home. In that I had my own office, I was also able to load up a playlist of tools I could plug into to help when needed. My day-to-day employment is ultra simple and streamline and requires merely answering the calls and managing incoming clients with much time when I am alone with the phones not ringing. If I was

triggered, I could access tools to help me ground: a tapping video by Brad Yates that was only a few minutes long for panic followed by a video on self-administered EMDR with my eyes following a balloon with a happy face on it, guided breathing meditations, followed by binaural beat music, and then calming soothing sounds like the sounds of mother nature. People from my online community suggested taking grounding items to work and I brought in some small ceramic pieces I had made, special rocks, sprigs of rosemary and fresh lavender I could crush and scent, or a vial of lavender essential oil, and my spritzer of scented gem essence protection spray, my protective rocks. A small little collection of items I could hide from sight, or display nicely on my desk. My spouse was usually a phone call away, and to spite his different belief about my condition, he was there as a friendly support, in that he works from home. Then, there was the “med support.” With the correct diagnosis of panic/anxiety, I also had access to something for when the terror was too deep to manage with my holistic tools. If I could not manage to ground with my holistic tools, or some part was terrified of someone in my space, I did not hesitate to use medication support. I used the meds with a goal of eventually not needing them.

What was also of great help at this time was being able to email my therapist in between sessions with regard to what was coming up, and she communicated to me when there was a bit too much information coming for her to manage, and we developed a system of what I wanted to work on the next session. I’d send FYI emails, or communicate, print this out and let’s work on this. Also, the simple act of “telling” her what was coming up created an ever present, ever vigilant connection of loving support. I wasn’t able to fully trust her, or feel this loving support, but I could feel it emanating towards me and could touch the edges of it.

Another bit that stays with me from the new books I was reading was the counsel of Alison Miller, unless one feels like it is a part of their life work to go public with their story, don’t – mostly because of the harassment from perpetrators. If I had read this **before** self-publishing the first chunk in the memoir process, I probably would have heeded the advice and forgone the harassment. On the other hand, I used the perceived harassment and triggering as a path to freedom. When triggered, you process, with processing comes more healing. That’s the rationale I embraced with my therapist.

Truth be told, it is difficult to tell if the harassment was “intentional” like the one perspective offered by the woman who had worked with other survivors, and what my parts were reporting, or if I was randomly “triggered” by situations – little time bombs laid down in the past that were going off because the time had come to process. For instance, being in conversation with someone who knows **nothing** about how certain gestures would cause one to be triggered, uses the gesture, and you find yourself triggered. It is also conceivable to me that I was creating the situations in order to be triggered to provide the impetus to process and recover. Sort of like an infection under the

skin that you scratch at. The itch and bother will remain until you go underneath and get at the infection below the surface. Me manifesting what I needed in the moment to recover. I choose to err on the side of optimism and interpret my experiences as everyday life colored by sensations, perceptions, and observations warped by trauma time – but also, **I always** took steps to generate safety. I always **listened** to my parts and took the action necessary to support the whole system feeling safe.

I am presently living in the community where extreme abuse occurred, and with this layer, parts began to report that people I came in to contact with in my life were affiliated perpetrators and fear flooded the system. My task, as the main front part, was to accept that this was a part of my psyche's sense of reality, and to use my grounding tools and/or med support to get through the moment, carve out time to process at home through journaling and the new somatic tools I'd learned from my therapist, and continue to clear what surfaced in therapy with my therapist.

Learning how to draw boundaries with inappropriate behavior, for the first time in my life, began to occur, and oddly enough, my co-workers were pivotal in teaching me how to draw boundaries, for the first time in my life – in my late 50s. To be fair, we also worked on this in therapy with my therapist an email or a phone call away for support. Two years later, I still see some of these individuals, but there is no charge, because we as a system know how to keep and stay safe, and the terror no longer dominates our life. Parts still report, they perceive certain individuals as perpetrators, and in some situations, individuals that seemed threatening no longer do. Trauma time colors everything! There is the added bonus of aging perpetrators. One reported perpetrator died, another is in his 90s, and I, as the main front part, or host, have taken enough action to keep the body safe that the system trusts we can manage whatever comes our way. We no longer fear death. We no longer fear how we will die. We trust our inner and outer angels and guides will keep us safe and we know how to trust the wisdom of our body and listen.

Obtaining this degree of awareness required discovering I had no boundaries, and taking action to generate healthy boundaries. Also, to NOT wait to report something that occurred that was inappropriate, and to devise ways to keep myself safe. For instance, over two decades ago, while an undergraduate student, there was someone who worked at the college who recognized me, and I didn't recognize him, because I, as the main front part, wasn't conscious of my suppressed world. He asked about my brother. I told him I wasn't in contact with him. He laughed at me, and repeatedly said, you don't remember do you? You really don't remember. Well, with time, and processing, I began to remember and in my memory bank was inappropriate sexual favors being given. My brother knew my sexual alter cues, which resulted in me being violated – one time by members of the wrestling team he was on. I as M., had been saddened to not get on the Mat Maid team, and had no recollection that I had switched and been used by the wrestlers, with the

coach walking in on the humiliating scene. This person, parts associated with my brother using me as a sexual commodity.

When this individual from the past came across my path, in a setting where I could not get up and walk away, and he began to go down the SAME road as 20 years before and began to ask me about my brother, I interrupted him, and told him, 20 years ago you told me “you don’t remember”, I want to tell you now, that I do. My brother is broken from the trauma (he indicated, I know) and I am still not in contact with him. I hope you aren’t involved with the same community. He said, no, I’m not. In hindsight, how silly is that, if he is asking me about it, he most likely is and hasn’t changed.

I then began to see this individual showing up at places I had frequented for many years. I thought to myself, could this be? Is that him? He came back into the setting where I have no control over who comes and goes and commented, I’ve been seeing you at the beach, I’ll see you down there next time. The energy freaked my system out. Indeed, the next time I went to the beach, he was there. I looked up online where he lived and discovered he lived an hour drive away from this beach. I went immediately to someone in this same setting, and asked if she thought this person’s behavior was kind of creepy, without providing details, and she agreed – that is creepy, which gave me confidence, and dispelled the charge, and helped with “do not tell” programming. I also looked up information about stalkers and realized, I definitely should not talk to him outside the setting I had not control over him coming and going in. I could control the situation in other settings.

I decided to NOT let fear get the better part of me, and the next day, I went to the beach alone, and took my power back. When he came back to this controlled setting yet another time, I made it very clear I was drawing a boundary by placing a chair between him and me, and first opportunity I got, I left this area until he left. This summer, I saw him again at the beach, but he gave me a very wide berth. Another time, I simply stayed in the water as I saw him eyeing my belongings. I waited until he left the beach. I had a back up plan of going to a group of people on the beach and explaining my situation, to sit there until he left.

Another individual that a young part reported as a perpetrator terrified the system. He entered the office and stood close to my desk. I asked him to please take a seat and expressed that I would let who he was coming to see know that he had arrived. He came directly to my desk, placed both meaty hands on them, and leaned close in towards me, and in a snarly intimidating fashion told me off for inviting him to sit down. Eventually he sat down. He then complained about me to the individual he was there to see. I did not wait, and as soon as he went into his meeting I sent an email to the firm administrator and told her he violated my personal space describing what he did. She, a survivor herself, said, “I know just what he is trying to do.” She sided with me, and agreed it was inappropriate, and the person he was there to see apologized for the client’s behavior. The way my desk is situated, I am

blocked in, and there is an exit that is about 2 feet wide. If someone wants to be intimidating it is quite easy. They stand and block my exit and begin to walk into my workspace, which is very tiny. I have nowhere to go, unless I dive under my desk, which is affixed, to a wall. Not a very friendly set up for someone with PTSD who needs to be aware of an escape route at all times.

One day a large male client came up the elevator and stepped into the office. He walked the three feet it takes to get to my desk, turned directly to face me then lunged directly at me and put his arms around me. I don't know this person on a personal level, and I don't have a close relationship with. I pulled away and told him I did not want to be hugged. He said, "but it is me, Billy." I told him, I know who you are, but I do not want to be hugged. I immediately told a co-worker, and she agreed - it was inappropriate. Some of the male clients are very respectful and we might shake my hands in a friendly way, but being lunged at and taken into an embrace by someone quite a bit larger than me was at that time terrifying. I told another co-worker who covered the desk on my lunch hour and he suggested standing up and putting my chair between myself and wonky clients that don't feel safe to me – and I use this tactic to this day, although, some act so quickly, I find myself caught off guard. In the moment, when this tall bulky male lunged at me to hug me, I was triggered, and it was if those moments of the threat of violation were happening all over. Now that that moment is passed, the threat associated with this individual has dissipated. He hasn't been back to the office. He taught me the lesson I needed to learn. Thank you! Now, when I am caught off guard, because I was able to draw this boundary, the fear doesn't seem to escalate.

Another client, a female, when I returned from tour with our art collective with a sassy short hair European cut commented on its length. She derided me telling me "You look like a boy, a really bad boy, you look like a very naughty boy." I was dressed in feminine attire that day – I was wearing a dress. I told her directly that I was not a boy and that I did not appreciate her comment. I IMMEDIATELY told a co-worker, who affirmed, that is completely and totally inappropriate. Now I know, when this person comes in, to do my job by informing who she has come to see that she has arrived, and excuse myself to get a glass of water. When she calls, I strip my voice of any warmth and drop into my super efficient professional transfer way of being: conscious identity alteration. Co-workers have offered to cover the front for me if there is someone who comes in I experience as harassing. I have not told them the details of my life, but they know I travel to work with a therapist for PTSD from childhood abuse.

Drawing boundaries with people who rent office space in the building I work at, on rare occasion, happens. There is a person who rents in our office who was invited to a Christmas party hosted by the office. At the party, he stood behind the chair I was sitting in a chair my spouse seated next to me. He pressed his privates against my back and I was mortified. Later in the week I confided in a co-worker about what happened and she confided he had been

creepy towards her, so I knew, he was someone to be careful with. One day, when I introduced a person who had worked with our business for a number of years, as a lovely person. He told her, “Don’t let her fool you, she’s nice on the outside, but she is really an evil person underneath it all.” The look on the client’s face was one of utter shock. I didn’t miss a beat and countered “Yes, it is true, to be human means to have shadow energy, and I choose to harness this in a positive way and give it safe expression in the arts” to which he had no response other than to bumble a few words about the comment going over his head. Drawing boundaries for the first time in my life, and it was something my co-workers taught me to do! My place of employment became a place that provided opportunity for growth. I shudder to think of what they would think if they knew this was going on with me. It never got in the way of my ability to do my job. I always found a way to cope. When I was out recently for two months for a brain aneurysm repair, the great empathy and concern proved to me that I was perceived as a valuable employee. They were so glad to have me back at my desk.

In addition to boundaries, TELLING, became an important action to take. As a survivor of extreme abuse, when one is threatened with death for telling, in insidious ways, taking ones power back requires learning to not only do what one needs to do to create safety and draw boundaries as well as to IMMEDIATELY TELL. Tell one’s experience to someone you trust. I went to another co-worker and told her I was stunned at being called evil, and they suggested how to handle it, and I followed their kind, generous, and insightful counsel. I wrote out a note to him, that I never passed on, and don’t give him the time of day any more. At the summertime company picnic, he made a snide remark, and I simply ignored him. I planned ahead with my spouse and we agreed to avoid him. It takes time, but eventually the terror associated with telling dissipates. With time parts learn that the perpetrators were “big fat liars.” One doesn’t die when they tell! A song of healing came out in this period and we recorded it and uploaded it to a private channel to play while working through the do not tell programming.

Lies, lies, lies, they told me I must die, lies they told me they did... trigger bombs they laid down, trigger bombs they did, trigger bombs they laid down they did.

They were lies, lies, lies, that they told me I must die...

With regard to the triggering, and the actuality of what was occurring, trauma time feels like a really distorted world charged with intense emotions and one operates from a fight/flight view of the world. It as if in the moment, one is simultaneously in the present and in the past, reliving the past. In the moment, it feels very real, and the body reaction is real, but whether or not a perpetrator from the past is actually intentionally harassing you, or if they randomly happen to be saying and doing things that trigger a flashback or

particular response is difficult to sort out. Rather than get hung up on whether it is an actual perpetrator, or someone who reminds you of a perpetrator, or if the color or phone call or gesture is intentionally triggering you, or accidental, I found it wisest to err on the side of safety. BELIEVE the reality of what your part is reporting, do what you need to ground, journal, draw boundaries, and get support in therapy to process what comes up, without judgment. Just accept this reality. As the main front part I have learned to listen, and anything that feels unsafe, I report it to someone I trust. I also know now when I am in “trauma time” and communicate this to my parts, and orient everyone to present time, and thank parts for coming forward to communicate. Just the other day I had a chance to listen, tell, and take more of my power back.

An individual was back in our neighborhood, who doesn’t live there, that just plain gives me the creeps. He has the same vibes my parts associate with perpetrating communities. I hadn’t seen him in six months. He was back. He drove by me, slowed down, said something, then drove on a bit further and paused – old trigger stuff. I mentioned him to my spouse. The next day my spouse encountered him, and went up to question him, and reported to me that he indeed was giving off a really weird vibe, and intends to talk to neighbors about him. He hasn’t been back since.

I have found responding creatively to re-write the story to be incredibly freeing, and also, the use of something called TAT – Tapas Acupuncture Technique ® that was demonstrated online by Malabika Shaw. When triggered by an individual, I would process the trigger, and then come back to the event again, in my minds eye, and imagine the situation once more. I would hold the TAT posture until all remaining charge dissipated. There is a particular hold taught by Stephen Levine that I also found very helpful which I also discovered on YouTube. You put one hand on the opposite shoulder, and the opposite hand under one’s armpit. Yet another really wonderful tool that comes from principles of conscious leadership is the notion of considering how the opposite of one’s story is true, or truer than your own story. When the story comes up, go through the scenario and imagine the opposite, or create an entirely different scenario, one with humor is of great help. Interesting, as I write this, I find myself dissociating, that old coping mechanism and pause in the flow to give myself a break while at the same time wanting to rush through this and get it over with. Some aspects of me are still afraid of storytelling, my protectors, and in the moment I affirm, *I am safe: safe in my spirit, safe in my soul, safe in my mind, and safe in my body - that was then and this is now*. I look around and note, there is nothing dangerous in the room, there is nothing to be afraid of, I am indeed perfectly safe.

An aspect wants me to convey some of what used to trigger us, and some of the bits about training and programming, and how we worked through it, and how exchanging notes with a sibling caused the system to go even deeper. Another aspect wants to have a glossary of sorts that just lists some of the

“bad owies” reminding me that learning that others experience horrible things, and reading what those horrible things were was affirming and also provided valuable information that helped us recover. As a front part I affirm that I allow myself to be all of me, I trust that this information is important to share, and perhaps some other practitioner, or survivor out there will benefit from this information. I respect the wishes of all of who I am and I trust that we can all remain safe.

Chapter Two: The Power of Corroboration

Rough Cut: I choose not to go over this chapter presently to refine and shape it. Given the nature of the material – understandably – the sooner I express it and get it out of my system the happier I will be. Perhaps at one point I'll work with an editor to refine this. I am honoring the request of the different aspects of who I am to include certain things, which I the host, am not entirely comfortable with. This is a part of the healing/integration flow. Being stretched in a healing sort of way. The primary reason my system chooses to include this material is that it really helped our own journey when we came across other survivor's experiences that resonated with our own, validation was powerful for us. We want to return the favor.

TRIGGER WARNING – DIRECT TELLING OF HISTORY WITH GRAPHIC DETAIL TOWARDS THE END OF THIS CHAPTER.

The first time I felt the power of corroboration on my system was when I attended a conference for ritual abuse survivors, as M., the host, it was inconceivable that what my different parts were reporting, and the flashbacks I was having, could have actually happened to me. I went to the conference two years into my journey and was shocked! People acting like me, with similar stories, similar histories. It helped with the big wall of denial and on some level I accepted that something significant had indeed occurred that I, as the front part, the host, the entity that engaged in “normal” life was not conscious of. At that time, I did not have any corroboration in that I had cut out ALL contact with my biological family. Although the stories of others at the convention weren't situations that I was directly involved with, their stories and dissociative issues were similar enough that it sent shock waves through my system. If they are reporting the same type of trauma, and are multiples as well, it simply doesn't make sense that such a large community of people would be “making it up.” You simply can't make this crud up! Not every person who has experienced extreme abuse receives corroboration from others, but my hope is, that those who don't, can draw strength from this story which contains a bit of corroboration, and know, that it logically follows that the way memory is processed with those with a dissociative identity disorder, what comes up is undoubtedly grounded in actual experience. One may never seize the big picture with exacting detail, but serious shit did indeed go down. You wouldn't be a multiple (DID) otherwise. Got it I ask myself? Got it I reply.

It took me twenty years of healing until I was strong enough to exchange notes with one of my sisters. I had searched and searched for her on the Internet uncovering nothing. It was a nephew who reached out to my brother on Facebook that helped us to reconnect. Around ten years ago I attempted to

connect, after a decade of my own processing, but it was too de-stabilizing for me, and my psychiatrist at that time suggested not having contact with her. I felt stable enough and we re-connected two years ago. This second time I reconnected with her, I went slow, and sent her information about my present life which she communicated she did not receive. I learned to follow up and call facilities and let them know I was sending a package. I wanted her to have a copy of my exhibition book from Vienna so she could see the art. I also sent information to her psychiatrist, a print out of my first two episodes of my memoir, and also the nature of the abuse while we were growing up. I was by my niece that my sister had a very close connection with this Dr. G. Oddly, after I sent him the material, hoping an understanding of our background would help him understand our family background, he suddenly quit, which I found perplexing. My sister disappeared a few months after that. Somehow I don't think this was a very wise thing to do, to send information to a Dr. I did not know, in that I have subsequently learned that sometimes Dr.'s associated with care homes are connected to perpetrating communities. Makes sense doesn't it. If you want to assure that someone a victim of your organized networks stays stuck and broken, place people on the inside to assure this. Just plain old sick common sense. Additionally, other survivors report this as such (see Alison Miller's book.) When she resurfaced, she was in a facility where she could not leave.

At this time, over her communal pay phone (getting through was a task in and of itself) we began to exchange notes about our lives over the phone and I inquired what I could send to be of support to her. I soon suspected she might be DID as well. When I received a letter in the mail I knew for certain this must be the case because it was written in different hand writing styles that reminded me exactly of the different hand writing styles my different parts have exhibited. Also was the word "sunflower" which I found curious, in that this was a strong image in my subconscious, and I had actually named my first dance company after the sunflower as an emblem of peace.

Sunflower now to me means to scatter, to dissociate, to fragment, to become disoriented, to not function, to not be able to think in an organized way, many small parts packed tight in a coil. I observe as I attempt to write about attempting to connect with my sister to be a resource that scrambling sort of programming comes back out and I find it difficult to tell this part of the story in a linear way. *I affirm to parts, we are safe; it is a choice to respond to this old programming, it won't hurt our sister by telling this story – let's not respond. That was then and this is now. I affirm, don't give me the scrambling; just give me the activity and emotions and experiences that caused us to be this way. With knowledge, with release, comes freedom. Lastly, I invite these parts to see the world now through my safe eyes, enjoying life.*

It was when her daughter came to visit a few years ago, and she observed me "switching" between my different aspects, and my niece's reaction that

first cause me to wonder if my sister might have DID. I simply thought she had psychotic episodes, and of course, must have PTSD. My niece reacted to my vocal change by saying "I like that! My mom does that too." I commented to my niece that her mother probably has a Dissociative Identity Disorder and I encouraged her to get her mother screened for both PTSD and DID in that I had learned that the right diagnosis is key for recovery. I discussed with my sister, over the phone, that I had this condition, and that it sounded as if she too might have this. I told her I was now safe and free from the perpetrators. I asked her if she wanted me to send her the workbook I was using, *Coping with Trauma Related Dissociation*, and she said yes. At this time she also asked for art supplies and wanted to draw and paint again, which I took as a very positive sign. She told me directly that she wanted to heal. I sent the book, drawing supplies, painting supplies and a journal.

When I checked in with her, she told me she was using the book and that it was helpful. She was also using the art supplies and journaling regularly. When I told her I was free from the perpetrators, she told me, that from her perspective, that she could never get free, and I wondered about that. I was struck by this information I read in Alison Miller's book *Becoming Yourself: Overcoming Mind Control and Ritual Abuse*: "The survivors would go out to the front door for a smoke, and the cult van would appear, pick them up, take them to be tortured and for their training to be reinforced, then drop them off at the time they were supposed to be back indoors. I have heard of organized perpetrator groups in other locations doing the same thing." I wondered if the period when my sister cycles and disappears, if she is picked up and taken to be re-accessed and reprogrammed.

I wondered if this was her story, or, if it was something else. The next time we connected we began to exchange a few notes, enough to confirm a few things, which was extremely difficult to process. She confirmed similar triggers: rats, helicopters and told me her big trigger was food. My parts report that different foods were meant to reinforce particular programming, and one would not know, when ordering a particular food, or buying something at the supermarket, this reinforced programming. She affirmed that the abusing groups were extremely violent, and also spoke of being taken to hotel rooms to be sold for sexual favors and we both confirmed it was oral and anal. I mentioned one art teacher, associated with a body memory of ritual abuse, and she offered up that she remembered him as a violent perpetrator. We both didn't want to go deep, just exchanged a few notes, and the exchanging of the notes made me realize, it is crazy to think that two siblings could have the same triggers and the same memories. This stuff really went down.

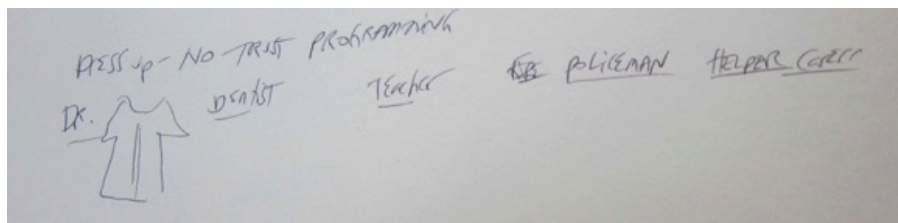
She went on another cycle of complete disappearance after being transferred to a care home that was 5 miles from where we lived as kids when the ritual abuse first began to occur. I called my niece and told her I did not think this was a safe place for her to be. She disappeared again for a few

months. The hospital she was at contacted me because they could not connect with my niece to move forwards with re-locating my sister. They wanted her sent to a care home in San Bernadino and I told them, absolutely not, that is the area where we experienced trauma. It will work against her process to be close to the areas where she was traumatized. The psychiatrist overseeing her case expressed his frustration with the system and how he is never able to talk directly with the “gatekeeper” who makes the ultimate decisions about her care. My sister had asked me to come on board her care team to help make decisions about her care in that she didn’t think her daughter always made the best decisions, and she expressed that her daughter had been abused (which I of course did not say to my niece.) I got through to the government agency that is responsible for overseeing her guardianship and was told only one person can be a guardian, and that it isn’t possible to share responsibilities. I told both the psychiatrist and the government agency about our background. The psychiatrist at that time confirmed her diagnosis of PTSD and dissociation. I advocated with having her go back to the place that is a lock down facility because she reported to me feeling safe there.

The support she has been getting is obviously not supporting the process of her getting free and it is possible she is still accessed when she is moved to facilities where she is free to move about. I know my mother would call her regularly, and any connection to family members that are not conscious translates into harm, not healing. Our culture, at this time, I believe is in the dark ages with regard to assessing psychiatric inpatients and providing them with the support they need to truly recover and from what I have read – facilities may have *infiltrators* who know what to look for with survivors, and use this information to work against the survivor recovering. I managed to express to her present social worker, who espoused that the facility was about recovery, that she would make no progress towards recovery until she started to get treatment for the trauma and help with managing her own Multifaceted Wonder Order.

I decide in this moment to let go of such a fierce hold and put my own oxygen mask on, in that, it is so painful for me to see my sister stuck in the system not making much progress towards recovery. At least some progress has been made. She knows how to journal, for a period of time she was returning to her art, she is aware she has DID, and she is aware she has PTSD. That’s a start. Also, I wonder if me contacting her makes things worse rather than better. When all else fails, trust one’s intuition. I have learned to recognize when I feel a compulsion to do something that feels forced and unnatural, and the gentle whisper and nudge from inner knowing. I’ll use this as my rudder and guide in relation to this sibling. Now on to what we processed in this final layer and how, with notes about corroboration, satisfying the parts of me that feel it is important to share – without judgment: simply old stuff passing through that passed through many perspectives of many parts that comprise my total self.

Overcoming Fear of Dr.'s, Policeman, Helpers in the World



A part reports how perpetrators impersonated certain professions, and we were conditioned to believe they were unsafe.

I'd like to begin this section with a hopeful recollection of overcoming my fear and mistrust of authority figures. It is my sense that a part of the indoctrination included building distrust in the system towards authority figures. At the time the small child experiencing the indoctrination believed these people as "real" professionals, but other parts report, the perpetrators used trickery. I decided to overcome my fear of policemen one day by approaching some Sheriffs I happened upon on my lunch hour and telling them I was working on overcoming my fear of law enforcement. I expressed that I had been exposed to some insidious things as a child, and distrust of law enforcement was one of the outcomes. They were really empathetic and wanted to know about what had happened, gave me their number to call, and said if I ever felt like I wanted to talk, I could. I discussed this with my therapist, and we both decided it was best to not discuss my experiences at that time and focus on stability. I had another chance with several highway patrol officers on their coffee break, and I approached them as well. They expressed, again, empathy, and wished my sister and me well on our journeys. I no longer fear law enforcement figures. These simple acts of confessing, for lack of a better word, dissipated the mistrust.

With regards to Dr.'s, it was a recent brain aneurysm repair gave opportunity for my system to work through their deep distrust of the medical profession. At this time I was working with the new psychiatrist, and when I first met with the neuro-surgeon and his nurse they wanted to know about any previous illnesses. I had my new official diagnosis. I told them the only things I had had was shingles at the age of 28. The Dylan aspect offered up being a survivor of extreme abuse, with PTSD, and a Dissociative Identity Disorder. My first procedure was scheduled for two weeks after this meeting. I was admitted to the hospital a few days later because the pain had become unmanageable.

At the hospital they inquired again about my medical history. I told them about the shingles. They asked for what else there might be. Dylan told them about the PTSD and the DID. This was really helpful for the nurses, knowing

about the PTSD. They asked what support I needed knowing what I was using as a PRN (per requested need.) The support staff for the procedure was amazing. When they checked in how I was feeling, the system expressed their fear. Someone told us that being afraid was natural for the situation and we were encouraged to use our breathing exercises. The second procedure, when they asked how we were doing, we expressed we were afraid of Dr.'s and we were using this opportunity to let go of that fear. The assistant neuro-surgeon, a female, was so kind and empathetic. She looked me inside and she said, we are going to take care of all of you inside there, acknowledging all of my parts. It was the most wonderful feeling, all of my inner selves, feeling seen, heard, validated. I no longer fear Dr.'s but I do have an odd reaction to which I think is just old programming that hasn't quite all sorted out. I went in for laser surgery recently, and something about the rapid lights, and the male Dr. in a white coat triggered parts that were trained to respond in a dyslexic sort of way. Today I noticed an uptick in this. Additionally, when I had to go back for a check up, I couldn't find the car, and parts wouldn't show me where it was parked until I acknowledged that the lights and laser surgery was triggering and scary for some parts. As soon as I acknowledged that, boom, I got a flash of where the car was parked. We went to the appointment and I knew to calm my inner selves orienting them to the present and that we were safe. Progress! Incident by incident.

Rats

At one point someone put sticky stuff (peanut butter) on my tied down naked body (around wrists, ankles, outside, staked limbs down into the ground), then a big blackish grey rat that looked like a sewer rat, and told me I'd be eaten alive by rats if I ever told; if I ever "ratted" on the community. So, the day I went to the beach, and just by chance saw a large dead grey rat laid out on a rock I usually lay my towel on – well, it triggered terror. Then, the very next day, someone called me into their office on another floor (who usually never talks to me) to look at something they had installed. They had put a stuffed rat into a construction hole in the wall (which again triggered fear, and distorted thinking and paranoia.)

My system then processed the memory behind the rats with a flashback. Still, rats showed up in my life, and it took time to overcome the fear. Two weeks later a dead rat was in the middle of the sidewalk along a pathway I use consistently to get to work. I kicked it into the bushes. It showed up again, more decomposed, in the exact same place, and appeared to have been placed there. I kicked it away again, and again it showed up. I processed the fear, then the anger and rage, and now – well, rats, dead or alive, no longer trigger me. When I discussed triggers with rats, my sister told me rats triggered her too, and I wondered if she had had the same insidious thing done to her, and I wondered how it was possible for us to have the same trigger if it was something that had NOT happened. It is conceivable that she just told me she

was triggered by rats, and wasn't, but we were exchanging triggers, she would express one that triggered her, and I would comment, triggered me to. Back and forth a bit like that. I was terrorized to believe I would be murdered if I "ratted" on my perpetrators.

I am really curious. If there is some creative component to memory, how can two siblings, independent of each other, process and develop an awareness of their triggers, and create the same triggers. What makes more sense to me is, well, just a form of corroboration, but I would be curious to know, is there something in the human condition where two individuals, independent of each other, both suffering from PTSD, become aware of certain things that are not tied into actuality, but some shared creative response that is genetic. Perhaps it could be epi-genetic, some sort of trauma passed on through our DNA, an experience of an ancestor, now that seems plausible to me. But to have us create from our imaginations without any real life experience, or experience from an ancestor, perhaps not unlikely. Unless there are certain things in life that are common metaphors within cultures, and one perhaps associates a particular event with a particular metaphor. For instance, being alone and abandoned might translate into the common cultural shared image of being dropped in a well. I don't know, but I am open to many possible scenarios, and don't hang on to one particular view or another. The important thing is, recovering, healing, shedding victim, shedding survivor, shedding thriver even to manifest something altogether new.

Hand Gestures

I know how to recognize them now, but it took time to figure it out as one of the two main front parts. They talk about something, and gesture with their hands using gestures that are not organic, natural, or congruent with what they are conversing about. For instance say, "How are you?" and point with their left hand to the left. I wasn't always conscious of these cues and their effects on my system.

When I first began processing I had memory of being trained to answer to hand cues, and I thought, this is way, way, way too crazy, impossible. A few years later I ran into a brother I hadn't been in contact with in years in a parking lot outside of a super market. He looked terrible. I had the courage to ask him if he remembered any witchcraft in the family. He told me "yes, and you don't remember, but we would use these on you", and he began to use hand gestures. He also said, "your baby was stillborn." True, when I was young, the host part of me wasn't conscious, but I had integrated new aspects of myself, who DID remember. I was shocked, and shoved the awareness down under, not wanting to consider the ramifications of his affirmation. In hindsight I own, it is a wise course of action to trust one's parts experiences and to err on the side of caution. Denial could cause the system to be less safe. In my experience, working with acceptance of what flows through one's consciousness as one processes helps the main front part(s) know how to

better manage day to day activities in interest of keeping the body safe.

With the second layer of trauma different gestures would trigger fear, or dissociation, or bring out different alters, and as each gesture came into my life, either intentional or un-intentional, I worked through the understanding behind the trigger. Sometimes this was in therapy, and we would process with somatic therapy, sometimes it was with a flashback while driving to therapy, sometimes journaling at home, or a flashback at home. I began to ask different parts of me the meaning behind the gesture, and once there was awareness of the meaning, then I could take right action to become free from fear, which was a process. I had to stick with it and be persistent with some things while at other times the awareness led to immediate relief from the trigger.

There was one day when someone came into our office and pulled out a magazine with the image of a man with a gun and put the image right in front of me saying, "I know this guy." The way he delivered this information I perceived as threatening. The gun triggered terror. I took the image, made a collage of it, and hung it near our office on a "wishing tree." A few days later a co-worker in his 70s walked by me, and made a gun shape with his hand and pointed it at me, which again triggered terror. I asked who knew the meaning of the gesture and the response was, we interpret that as a death threat. Parts of me were trained to always see that gesture as a death threat, so, even if someone not associated with the abusing community pointed a fake gun at me, it would trigger a sense of our life being threatened. Once I understood this I was able to begin to draw boundaries. I initially asked the person playfully, "What is that? That gesture" and he looked at the gun shape in his hand and said, oh, that means, everything is okay. I looked up its meaning on the internet and saw that it could be interpreted as flirting, but was more commonly associated with a threat of harm. The next time he walked by, he had both hands in his pocket, and he pulled them out and "shot" at me. I drew a boundary and told him, please don't do that to me, I don't like being "shot" at, AND – a crucial part for me here, I told someone immediately about it, a co-worker, and they affirmed, they would be uncomfortable with the gesture. Eventually the gesture lost its power over me. The other day, rather than make the shape of a gun with his hands, he made the sound of a bomb exploding. I was non-plussed and completely ignored him. This person has lost all capacity to trigger or terrorize me. Just a few days ago he tried, creeping up to my desk and telling me, *you don't know who I really am*. My parts fought back internally and in the moment I think, "F-off, I'm safe now." I've told all the staff about this experience with this attorney and they all agreed, very much not okay! Taking my power back, one gesture at a time.

Eyes, Being Watched, Psycho-Torture

Eyes, and many of them, showed up in my art work over and over, but it is only within the last year that the "do not tell" programming broke down to the degree where the understanding of why surfaced. A part reported that the

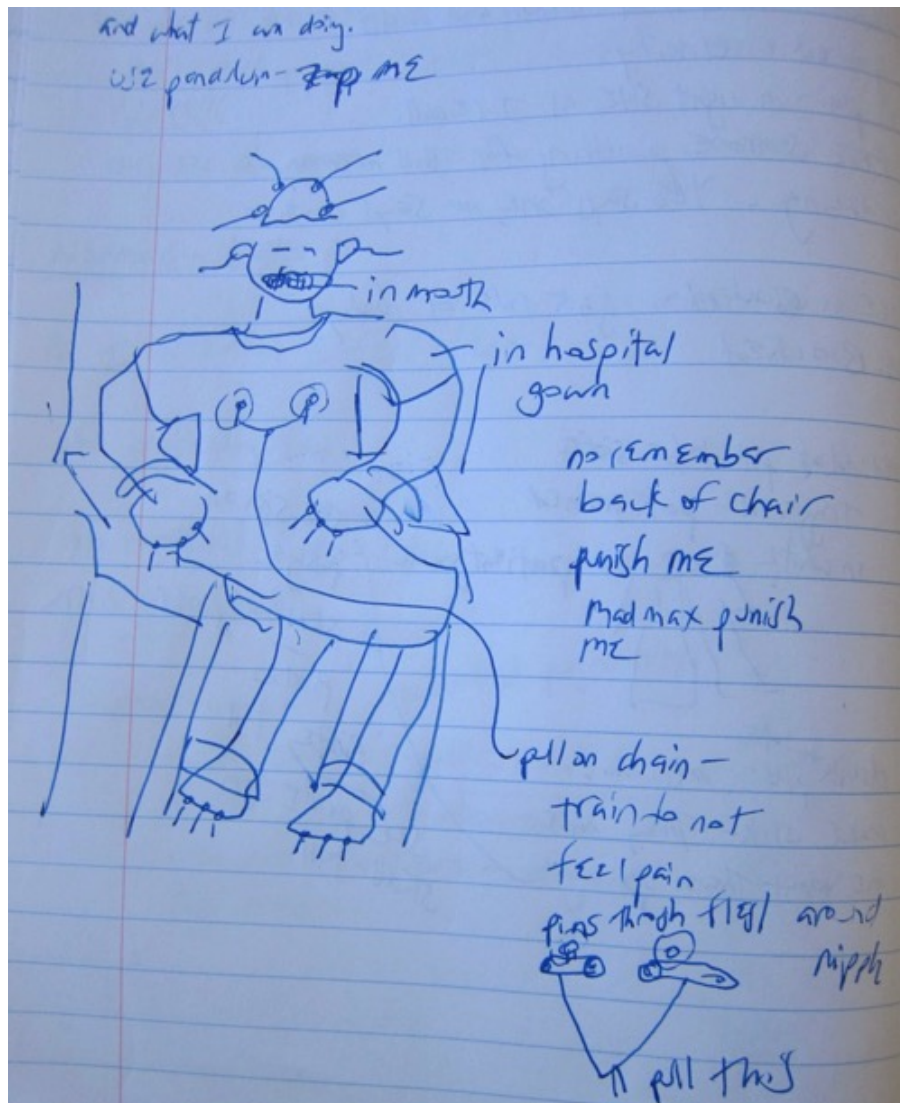
“bad owie cult evil people” did lots of weird things. One weird thing they did was use glass eyes, and sleight of hand, to make it seem like the eyes were going into our head through our ears. Then we would come back to another training session. We were cued for one part to come out and report the activity, then cued for another part that was told to fear that these eyes would always be watching our every activity. This part was not aware of the part that was reporting. The “bad owie cult evil person” would tell this part what the other part had reported and say, “See, we know EVERYTHING you do.” Insidious bastards! F ‘em!



Another way this community instilled a sense that I would always be watched was in relation to mirrors, and as I look back, I see how in my art I used mirrors now and again, and can see the trauma trying to tell through this. I am 57 this year, and it is only 3 months prior to my 57th birthday that I got to the root of WHY it was so difficult for me to look in the mirror. I hated looking at myself. A part reported that we were psycho-tortured into believing that whenever we looked in the mirror, or saw a mirror, it was a reminder that our perpetrators were watching us, that we would never escape their watch. They used the same type of smoke and mirrors lying and manipulation as with

the eyes. After this revelation, the power of the mirror was broken. I can now look in the mirror and actually like what I see. I can look at myself in the morning and ask myself “What do you want today body? How can I make you happy?” This is a definite pattern in the process. One becomes aware of a particular way of being in life that seems wonky, out of the ordinary, and once the causality comes to conscious awareness, this issue clears. Sometimes it happens immediately, while at other times, it takes perseverance and persistence doggedly challenging old belief systems and training.

Following is an image drawn by one part that illustrates one form of psycho-torture. There are needles under my fingernails, toes, and safety pins through my nipples attached to a lightweight chain they pulled on. With excruciating pain one gets to a point where you begin to cry out and ask to be killed, to be allowed to die. Then the body begins to dissociate and one may have hallucinations (especially if you were given drugs) and reality distorts. In some instances the body shuts down and the victim is brought back to life.



Psycho-Torture drawing

Training to Write Backwards & Other Cognitive Processing Errors

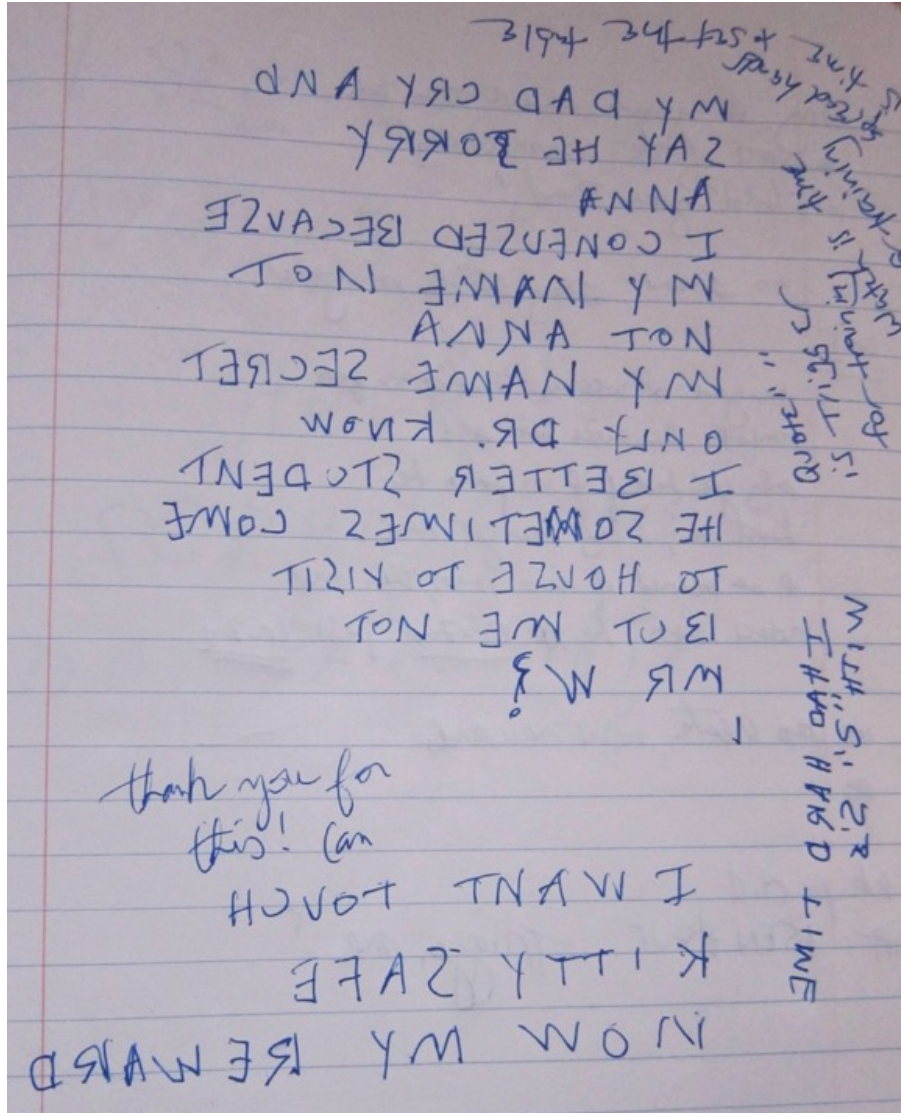
I have no idea why, but a part of what one part was trained was to write backwards. My sense is that it was a part of some experimentation. In this setting I remember being drowned and then resuscitated, and asked to report on the experiences. There was also training where the direction left was interpreted by my brain as right, and right left, the direction up as down, and down as up. Parts also report that we were trained to transpose letters in spelling. For instance, I know apple is spelled apple, but another part might be trained to put the fourth letter last for instance, so apple becomes appel. I was conditioned to present as stupid. I remember in the third or fourth grade failing some reading tests at school. I loved to read and me, as the main front

part, was really perplexed by this failure, which embarrassed me greatly. I am ashamed to admit, at this young age, in that moment, I figured out how to cheat on the test so I could get out of this remedial reading group. I must have created parts for different classes in that later in life, my records show me taking particular classes, and I have absolutely no recollection of what I did in those classes, or ever studying for those classes. For instance, I received a C in a community college history class, but to this day I have no memory of that class.

I do know, that with dance training, and processing the trauma, the bulk of the learning difficulties and cognitive processing errors cleared. It is usually when I am overly stressed, or tired, have too much on my plate activity wise, or I am distracted by something and not paying attention that these old blips turn up. Why my different parts had different writing styles is a mystery to me. As stated previously, a letter from my sister showed she too has this.

The writing backwards journal entries that follow reveal the role my father played in this. The part that experienced this indicated my father received cash for me being used in these experiments and that my father cried, and appeared sad. He expressed he couldn't help himself.

CASH
HE GIVE MY DAD
28 STUDENT
HE TELL ME I A GOOD
MY FATHER TAKE ME
AND HE HAVE ACCENT
HE KIND OF PORTLY
GLASSES
AND WARE YES
A WHITE COAT
WITH
HE A DR
DISORIENT ME
THAT
LIQUID
THEN GIVE ME
2AY YUMMY
WAKE ME TASTE AND
AND PUT UP BACK END
HE HIT WITH RULER
WHEN I WAKE MISTAKE
WAM HIT ME HARD
TELL SECRET 2
I KILL MY BODY IF ANY PART



Cover Memories

Early in my process there were some flashbacks that I have come to learn are called “cover” memories. It seemed absolutely impossible for these experiences to have happened. Some were so strange I thought I would never divulge them anywhere outside of therapy until I spoke with my niece recently. I asked her if she was ever able to discover from her mother where she disappears to. This time she reported she went to a place under the ground and saw tall skinny aliens. During this layer of processing I realized I had a part that “floated” outside of the experiences that was not a part of the system, nor controlled by perpetrators. This part was able to report how trickery was used. For instance, the fear of wood chippers, and one part thinking dead

bodies were put in them to be chopped up – well, they used a mannequin. One part believing someone was being burned alive in a room with a window in a mortuary. Another aspect reported it was done through trickery. I had one aspect named Frankie tell of tall aliens, and my floater reported her perspective that this was trickery. Following are the journal entries. I notice I feel great shame when I share these and comfort my inner parts and tell them *“those were lies told to you that you are stupid and no one will believe you, you aren’t believable. I believe your experiences!”*

here was around 3
an odd shape clam

they couldn't get it
out so they
want

to a little food
truck, cut it out
and roast it
if I wanted
was

unizing
kitchen
ly

I love my
inner
frankie
punishes
the
unhappy
alien

they
kept
us alive



My name is ~~no~~ Frankie
I SEE Real aliens
Floater SEE?

I SEE them- they talk
in radio frequencies
machine capture their images
they use translator
translator help understand
they communicate telepathically
teach me to read thoughts
they project thoughts into me
from distances.

They project thoughts that are
lies to make me think wrong
things to make me crazy.

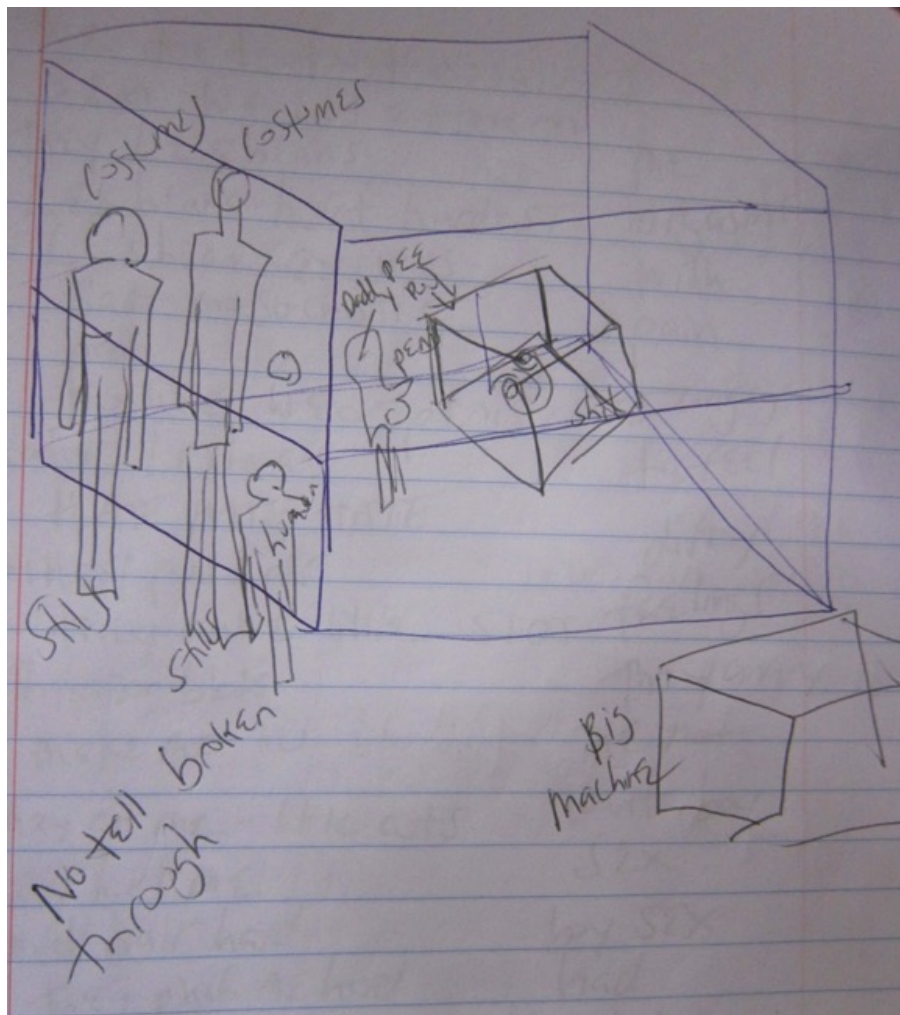
They say NEVER be free.

SEE it tricky.

Some part SEE help, put on costume.

Some part- they tell you
that read mind- you read mind-
say you got it right-

Then when time to read your mind,
one part tell what thinking
and tell on part so you
believe you reading mind.



Homelessness

I have always had a fear of homelessness and wondered what created this fear. Recently I discovered the root of this fear – something that seemed like “homelessness” programming. If our system got to a certain layer of knowing, or telling, parts trained to live in paper boxes were trained to come out and act crazy. For some reason, my sense is, this training did not take for me. I wonder about one of my sisters, in that she lived on the streets for five years. Here is the journaling associated with this information.

I feel like I am homeless
I was put in a box
the box was speed on
I had to come out
and suck a penis
I pooped in the box
I went crazy and ate
the poop
I was in a room
with glass windows
Man was looking at me

I was then given a
slinky from daddy
for reward
he pay me with kindness
for this. My daddy no
like this he say.
He cry and say sorry
for hurting me
he say he no able
to stop.

Telephone Calls

Presently I do not own a phone and I don't bother answering the phone at

home unless I know the caller. At my place of employment, that is my primary task, to answer the lines, and on a daily basis it became a vehicle of recovery. There were a number of types of phone calls that I found highly triggering, and it was brutal to work through them all, one by one. What helped most was bringing a journal with me to work, and being present with myself when I was triggered by a phone call, and checking in with the internal landscape to ask for insight about the particular meaning. I'd then process the issue in therapy and continue to work at keeping the body calm when re-triggered at work until the trigger eventually had no power over me. For instance, there was one instance when someone called the office and just began to laugh on the other line, and it triggered intense fear as well as a sense of lunacy/craziness/insanity in me. One part offered up that that was a signal to "lose it", "play crazy", and this was a way of showing loyalty to the perpetrators, and also to protect the perpetrators by means of discrediting an individual through means of being able to say – ah, they are nuts, off their rocker, their judgment and experience therefore is totally off base.

My therapist called it, going down the rabbit hole, and each time I was triggered in this way, I cognitively worked at shifting the reaction by labeling the reaction/thought. I would tell myself things like "that is a cognitive error, that is distorted thinking, that is post traumatic stress induced paranoia" and I would use the various tools in my toolkit to calm the body down. I also began to challenge the callers. When other people would call and I'd ask who they were, and how I could direct their call, if they started out laughing, I'd ask them, "why are you laughing? Is there something funny about the way I answer the phone?" Soon, people quit calling who would begin laughing when I answered the line, although the other day, I did answer a call with a "laugher" on the other end asking for someone who didn't work there. I was non-plussed, one small victory in a string of victories.

When highly triggered at work, if needed, I would take a "panic pill" for escape, but tried to reserve them for only the most extreme of situations. Other times I developed a system to calm my body down. I'd first do some tapping (emotional freedom technique) for panic by a gentleman named Brad Yates on YouTube; then I'd watch an 8 minute self-administered EMDR video on YouTube with nice smiley balloons and positive affirmations; then I would listen to stress reduction sounds (bi-lateral music, isochronic tones, sound with binaural beats) followed by nature sounds (bird songs, ocean, water). For the calming nature sounds I'd test out a few different links on YouTube and settle on the one that was the most calming in that moment. The body knows intuitively what it needs if one listens deeply enough.

In addition brought grounding objects to my workspace: rocks, a ceramic bowl or small sculpture I had made, flowers, protective gems, as well as smells. Lavender essential oils worked well as did a gemstone and flower essence for protection. My spouse was always a phone call away and was a great listener. He would attempt to help me see the humor in things. If found

something particularly disturbing he would call several times a day. Another type of phone call I found triggering were hang up calls that came in succession. For instance, I'd answer the phone, someone would immediately hang up, and I'd get another evenly spaced after this call, and the caller would hang up, and then another, and he or she'd hang up. Some callers talked in a disorganized fashion with speech that didn't progress logically and truly sounded mad For instance:

Me: "Hi, this is M., how may I direct your call"

Caller: "What day is it? What's your name?"

Me: "This is M. of (company name), how may I direct your call"

Caller: "What did you say your name is? One, nine, twelve, how's the weather today?"

Me: "How may I direct your call?"

Caller: "How are you?"

Sometimes I would simply hang up. I wonder now, in the moment, if I manifest such a work situation in order to create a container to work through this final layer. My sense of how it worked is that my system in the past was triggered to come unglued and discombobulated, and then, in a discombobulated state, triggered again to access alters to reconnect with the perpetrating community. My system was organized in layers. One set of cues to access certain parts, and once these parts were active, different cues given for these parts to get to parts even deeper to come out who would get in the car with perpetrators, then these parts triggered to bring out other parts that had different tasks or jobs. Some of these tasks or jobs; there might be many parts that took care of carrying these out.

In exchanging notes with my sister, especially in relation to this sense that I had programming inside to decompensate and act crazy, is that she had something similar with her system. When I expressed to her that I was free from the bad family, and she told me that it was impossible to break free, she also communicated that she used psychosis to escape from the perpetrators. I shared with her my sense that we had parts trained to descend into psychosis, or pretend to be weird and crazy. In observing my own process, I noted that when in states of extreme terror, paranoia would surface, and distorted thinking, and one could follow that path and "go down the rabbit hole", or one could use whatever tools they had disposal to in order to remain present with the experience and process the trauma creating the terror, the paranoia, the distorted thinking. One psychotic break was enough for me, and when the same degree of terror came up, I stuck with it, and processed the issues underneath it all. I found I had choice. I could choose to process. Another sister shared that she had has this same revelation. She consciously chose to not "go down the rabbit hole," and was the first of the three girls to begin to process. This sister was the youngest, and she was at one point initiated in a

ceremony, and passed around the kids standing in a circle where we were all made to touch her inappropriately. I am so ashamed about this, and intentionally commit to shedding the shame. I was a powerless victim at that time. It was not my fault.

It is interesting, I observe as I work on this project, the weird phone calls come, but I know now how to handle them. The last few days I've had a call, with nobody on the other line, that reverberates and echoes so loudly it hurts my ears. I cognitively know, immediately, this is the type of call that could be triggering and respond to the call accordingly. I hold it away from my ear, tell whoever may be on the line, I can't hear you on the other line, the feedback is hurting my ears so I am going to hang up, and I hang up, no issue. Or another caller, repeatedly asking me, "How are you? How are you? How are you?" Parts have learned we have a choice. We are free from the past. We no longer have to respond to triggers. No stress, no dissociation, no fear, just a bunch of irritation and aggravation.

Another important puzzle piece to becoming free from the triggers and the programming was to challenge the thought/or rationale. I would write down what concerned me, and conduct Internet research to disprove the thought or the rationale, and repeatedly worked in this fashion disproving the thought, and at other times discovering, wow! That person would be a good person to avoid (lived in the neighborhood where I lived as a pre-teen and parts associated with perpetrators). It helped the triggers loosen their hold. I as a front part needed to come out of denial and take the triggering and concerns of my parts for what they were – something to not dismiss, but pay close attention to. That it best served the journey to be open to processing the concern, process it, let go, move beyond, and then integrate what sought to be integrated.

This is one dynamic where I feel as if the somatic therapy wasn't able to support well. Some responses were conditions created by psycho-torture. How one reacts to such a trigger was so instinctual. I imagine like how a Pavlov trained dog might respond. My sense is that these responses were stored at different brain levels, and to support the healing journey, I listened to different tones that were targeted towards clearing and healing at different brain levels. At some point I read the writings of someone who was a programmer and I seem to remember that this was mentioned as such.

Overwhelming Emotions

With this final layer came overwhelming feelings of sadness, pain, and shame. It is only recently that I realized that there are different parts that were created just to house these emotions. I believe the corroboration with my sister gave me the courage to go even deeper, and process more. When talking with my sister, she affirmed, for her, it was a really violent group, and also, she affirmed the bit I had hoped was all made up, being sold for sexual favors, oral and anal, at hotel rooms, which I imagine was a way of funding this

groups activities. When I received this form of corroboration, it became a bit more difficult to totally discount all of my experiences, and there was the rationale, if this recovery work resulted in corroboration, doesn't it follow, that the other recovery work that isn't corroborated might very well have its own grounding in some semblance of actuality. I had had bits of corroboration in the past; even meeting someone on the street who had left the community, her name I thought was Susie Q. She told me her real name, and expressed, in the group, nobody used their real name. The encounter with one brother, affirming that my mother was a "witch" and that the community had used hand signaling with me to change alters. Yet another brother telling me that my babysitter was a "real witch" and that I had a weird attachment to her.

I went into a deep depression after exchanging notes with my sister and a degree of pain I hadn't been in touch with surfaced, so intense, I found myself longing to be dead rather than feel the pain. I had the foresight to reach out to the same online community of fellow survivors and then to a suicide prevention online community. Talking to people via email and in a support room helped me realize that I was feeling this way because the degree of pain outweighed my coping mechanisms, and once in therapy, I began to work on that component of my healing process.

In addition to coping with pain, shame and guilt also came up in processing this final layer. The way in which the emotions were processed caused me to wonder if the emotional body has layers. It seemed to me, that in order to get to the underlying pain, I needed to begin to process the shame and guilt first. For these overwhelming, debilitating emotional states, what brought relief was the discovery of Bon Buddhism meditation techniques. As a dancer I connected with the concept of inner spaciousness, like a limitless sky, and when I meditated on such a space and brought an awareness of the emotion into such a space it helped break up the density of the emotion making it bearable. After the meditation the emotion didn't seem quite so unbearable. I would like to note that at this phase in my journey therapy alone did not contain the process entirely. It set the healing pace for me, and provided a sacred safe space that I ventured to weekly, but as much work occurred outside of her office as in. The practitioner I believe held the healing container for me during the times we weren't working in her office being only an email or a phone call away.

For this layer of trauma sound became an integral part of the journey. I listened to compilations I discovered on YouTube ranging from creations intended to balance chakras, cleanse one's aura, isochronic tones, binaural beats, rife frequencies, and at times, shamanic drumming. In addition to sound, simple spontaneous singing working through what was surfacing with song, some of which I recorded and uploaded to my YouTube channel to refer to when needed. As with my entire journey, journaling remained a vital part of the process. It was interesting to me, that the material seemed so volatile, that although I continued my work as a visual artist and dancer, the energy

from this layer did not seek to be processed through these mediums.

Car Signals

What was processed in my consciousness in this last layer is how car signals were used to get different alters to switch, that in conjunction with the hand signals and telephone calls, which would call up so to speak, or awaken, different parts of my programmed system. For pick up, a car with one tail light out, and blinking. Emergency lights flashing, also to stop, pick up. Also, license plate numbers were used as well. [No able to communicate specific of this, part of me that holds this information doesn't have means to communicate it, almost an animal like nature that responded more like a dog would respond to a command or cue to something.]

Another tool that helped with this “deprogramming” phase of the process. I came across a suggestion to journal every day your name, what date it was, and something that transpired, and to look back over this, and work on remembering. I did this for around six months. It was really powerful in taking back my mind. I worked it as a positive memory journal and would write the date, my birth name, my chosen name and the positive memory. A week later one would try and recall these positive memories. My whole life I had to look to a calendar to know what day it was, and in the moment, even on the same day, from moment to moment. If I looked at the calendar at 8:00 am, I would know what day it was, but at 10:00 am, if you asked me again, I would have to look again. It was a way of taking back my identity in relation to time and choosing to focus on the positive things happening which enabled me to become free from this sense of someone else controlling my identity as well as my activity in relation to time and space.

Helicopters, car vibrations that booms, beeps and blipping sounds

Oh goodness, the sound of helicopters and the resonance of some cars, a hellacious trigger as were beeping sounds and vibrations from cars playing music with strong bass vibrations played loudly. In exchanging notes with my sister, helicopters triggered her as well. It took a year to work through that, and now I can hear and see helicopters without being filled with fear, or distorted thoughts arising, or feeling paranoid. Behind this memory were images of being transported somewhere, and taken under ground for experimentation. I have a distinct memory of my father crying, and apologizing for this, in that he was a part of whatever syndicate this was – getting me there, and for the first time I had empathy. I think perpetrators in organized abuse want to make it look like it was the immediate family, but in my experience, the worse stuff was by the larger community. My father was an engineer with a genius level I.Q, and when he died, I am told record of his work and association with the military was erased. I don't know if this is true or not, but there are some very clear images of horrid trauma in an experimental setting. There were intentional drowning and resuscitations, and

after coming back, being asked about what I experienced. Parts of me don't feel safe to share more on this topic – so I am going to respect that boundary. Shock therapy was used for me to forget is what seems to be part of the picture, and also, just to torture me. I think this is why, when recovering memory, and healing from trauma, my body would jolt as if a big shot of electricity was going through it. It would also jolt if I “told” or “accessed” certain images or memories as a form of punishment. I don't think the one thing the perpetrators were aware of, is how memory is stored, it is not only a mind thing, but a body/spirit/soul thing, and if the person who has been victimized happens to be passionate about dance and the arts, then the memory can manifest through these experiences. As the body comes into physical alignment that is natural then the memories trapped in the un-natural alignment and held in the physical tension is released. At least, that is my internal understanding of how all of this unraveled. I discovered another layer of some 35 aspects of myself and re-entered the “integration flow” integrating these aspects into my day to day life, which is much about simply letting go and giving expression to different ways of being.

Construction Vehicles, Highway Signs, Trigger Cars, Caution Tape

It is only this year that I got my bearings back so to speak. When driving on highways north became south and east west and while driving, I would become disoriented, with urges at times to drive into median dividers. When getting on the highway, there were frequent moments of panic not knowing if I should be going north or south. When attempting to get to my psychiatrists office, scramblers in my psyche would come out, and I would suddenly not know where I was, and if it hadn't been for having an iPad with Internet capabilities, I would never have gotten to the office.

I overcame this by practicing driving to his office 40 minutes away on days I wasn't scheduled to see him. I did this until I no longer dissociated getting to the office. Construction vehicles were triggering because of the association with imagery of how body parts were disposed of. We put bits in toy cement truck, play cement truck when playing, and they tell us when we grow up we will put dead bodies in the cement and then no one will find the dead bodies because they will be covered up by houses. They threatened to kill me as a small child and chop me up and put me in a cement truck if I ever told. It was the same with plumbing trucks; I was told they would bury us in the sewer and we would never be found. There were certain types of cars that were covered with gobs of decals and reflectors that parts reported as “trigger cars” that would cause us to instantly become disoriented and dissociate when we saw them. It put us in a vulnerable state with intent to make us accessible by the perpetrating groups. Behind the triggering of a gas company truck was that every time I would see that logo, or the stripes on the back of the car, it would remind me that I would be burned alive if I ever told the secrets of this community. I note, that as I write in my multifaceted way, that as I tell in my

integrated flow, my style of writing shifts a bit as I offer this information. It becomes much younger, and uses simpler words. This is me. Sometimes the system is poetic, sometimes childlike, sometimes blunt and straightforward.

Okay, that's enough says some part. We don't need to tell it all. Now it is time to tell straightly what went through our system. Again, with these experiences, they were often processed with many parts of my system. It took often reliving the event over and over from the different perspectives. Some of the telling is piecing it together from these different perspectives. I think the way a multiple processes may be very different than how someone who processes who is a singleton. To this day, I am not able to recount the experiences in a coherent way. The telling is jumbled and disoriented and I think this reflects how the experiences were organized. My guess is, at this point, there were around 70-80 sub-parts of my psyche that were created to survive. We've processed to let go and not have to look at it again. Who would want to? So, it is difficult to dredge this up and tell, but feels necessary somehow in this final act of letting go of all of the trauma drama of it all. Some of it, I'll simply just list, without the details, and some, I'll share what the reconstructed experiences from many perspectives wound up being. In each of these, I imagine myself going back in time and rescuing myself from these situations, and also, utterly annihilating these places – using a bit of dark humor in my minds eye for release.

Anal rape – my first body memory

Incest – no want to say who actually, too embarrassed for my family

Child pornography – movies and photos

Child/teen prostitution – don't want to go into details. Multiple communities. Engineering friends of my father, people in the golf community (was sodomized with the end of a golf club), people associated with churches, people at parties.

Bestiality

Orgies

Buried Alive: 8-10 parts organized this. I think I was around 6 or 7 years of age. It was on "Easter Sunday." I was put in a pit that had hot coals at the bottom, and then they put wet plywood on top. I was naked in this mock grave. They put a board on top with a hole in it. A copper tube was stuck through the hole. Sand was poured in. I was hot in my "hell." I was being buried alive. They took me out and raised me from the dead. I was dressed in white, then covered with poop, then pissed on, then made to suck someone's

dick that was in a black robe, like a judges robe. I threw up on his shiny black shoes and they made me lick off the vomit. I was tied to a small cross and ridiculed. Other children ridiculed and threw rotten food at me.

Suspended upside down from a tree tied up in a rope, in a net bag.

Witnessed what one part believed was a person with limbs tied to two opposing cars, and the two cars drove in different directions, and the body was pulled apart. This happened in a deserted place, the dessert. Knowing what I know now, this was probably trickery.

A white truck that had meat hooks hung from it. Was used to dismember bodies. Chopped, chain saw.

Being used for “bait” to pick up young runaways, and they would be abducted to be used for the bad ceremonies. I don’t know how many. It may have been just this one, it may have been many.

Made to believe roasting men’s penises on sticks and eat cut off penises.

There was one teen I remember distinctly. I think somehow I vowed in my heart to one day tell. This was processed by around 15 different parts of myself. I relived this memory over and over from these different perspectives. She was plumb shaped, had stringy hair, it was long. She had blue eyes and a very bad complexion. She was wearing dirty jeans and a boys flannel shirt (not sure about this for sure). She was murdered in a shower in an empty apartment after she was raped by around 10 people at this place. She had her mouth covered and was drugged. She was placed on a table and body organs were taken out. At some point the remains were put in a black bag that zipped up and temporarily put in a field. My parts that cleaned were responsible for cleaning the apartment meticulously. The carpets were replaced and it was made to look like the apartment was being redone before it was rented out again. Associated with this time of processing was an awareness of body parts being put in a pit with lime. At the bottom of the pit, chicken wire. Later in time we went back and the decomposed remains were gotten rid of. Some taken out on a boat and dumped, some taken into the mountains and dumped. I note that at one point my sister called many years ago, before I was conscious of the trauma, and she was in a psychotic state, and she was screaming, there is blood all over the apartment, there is blood all over the apartment. I assumed she was psychotic at least. From what I have read of Stan Grof’s work, I think this may have been her perhaps working through similar memories with psychosis.

An African American man taken and hid in a cabin in the wilderness. He was cut into while he was alive with a razor blade. They made little

checkerboard shaped cutting into his skin peeling away the flesh and made fun of him. They made me play checkers on his belly. I do not know what became of his body.

Father R. at St. Mark's church – paying me from money from the donations to do bad things I don't want to say, suck on his weanie and have sex with a girl. There was a room next to the altar. Men in the congregation were watching pornography films with this father Rudy. There was a female assistant at this church who knew of this abuse.

The SBM Church – being taken there to give oral sex to priests – I was dressed up like a boy. I close my inner eyes and don't want to look at this. I hated this so much!

Last night, I had a series of images, which began to bring the story together and communicate certain causalities about fear in the community. I have a distrust of neighbors, and have had this fear that there are some who are planted by the community to watch me. I know this is an irrational fear. I hadn't asked for the underlying reason behind the fear, but last night I was given the big picture of one of the neighborhoods I was in when a big chunk of the abuse happened. There was A. Forey across the street that was one of my trainers, with a big white police dog I loved. I would be dressed up in pretty dresses, and driven to fancy parties in Beverly Hills, and was molested at these parties taken into a bedroom where I did what I was trained to do. At one party, they rolled back a rug, and there was a large pentagram underneath the rug in inlaid tiles. I was given a wad of money that I would then take with me and give to A. Forey. There was a de-escalation of the event. I switched to my front part and she would lovingly put me in the shower and clean me up, put a big comfy robe on me, and tell me, it is only a dream, only a dream, and my sense was she used hypnosis on me. I asked one of my brothers about her, who is not conscious of the trauma, and he for years would tell me, she was a witch, a real witch, and you had a really weird connection with her. It was common knowledge that she was my babysitter. My brother later recanted the story, and said he wasn't sure, it might have been that he just heard my mother talk about her in this context. I remember this brother at ceremonies, and other siblings as well, including passing my baby sister around a circle, and all siblings required to touch and molest her, which I already mentioned in this book.

One of my parts reports that this woman, A. Forey, she was also my mother's lover, and they would take me into their bed and molest me. There was another woman in the neighborhood that conducted séances, and I as the aspect that wasn't conscious of the bulk of the trauma, remember these events, but don't remember anything un-toward happening.

There was a family with a silver Weimeraner dog that I loved, and it was this family where I was introduced to the strange ceremonies with black robes in their house.

So, given the nature of the neighborhood, and the indoctrination that I

would never be free, it follows that an underlying belief system that neighbors are perpetrators and unsafe would exist. In the flow of the moment, illustrating my process, I orient my parts to present time, and invite those who aren't aware to peek out through the conscious parts eyes, and see that we have been keeping the body safe, and life has wonderful moments, and nobody from the neighborhood has accessed the system. M. has kept the body safe when cars that are triggering are in the neighborhood. I know that it is my task to be sensitive to the aspects that know when someone feels unsafe, and to listen to them with regards to why, and to NOT be friendly to everyone, but use our total judgment.

It was in Whittier California where this occurred, and also in Whittier California, at a St. Bruno's Catholic Church where parts report additional trauma. I had no conscious recollection of catechism, and wondered about this, and re-remembered what I consistently suppress once my parts offer their perspective, with this comes that familiar feeling of shame, and simply allow myself to feel this, and process the emotion. This time when it comes up, I work at acceptance, that this wasn't someone else, but it was me. I understand now the compulsion to make art with hundreds of Barbie Dolls, imagining them with their limbs pulled apart. Parts report, that catechism time, kids were split up. Kids that got the standard Catholic training, and those that had this bad other training. I, as the conscious front part, one went to a nun to tell her of the abuse I was conscious of at home, and her response was, your family are good Catholics, they would never do that. This aspect of me wasn't aware of how this was being used for shut up, or silencing training. This same nun, in my secret catechism, took apart a Barbie Doll, and told me if I ever told, I would be pulled limb from limb, and proceeded to tear the Barbie Doll apart. I was trained in what to reveal and what to NOT reveal in confession. My sense is, that the community affiliated with the dark religion, used the space for some of their work. There was a building associated with the church, where, in some bizarre ritual, I was led to belief I was giving birth to an animal, it was a small kitten. As I recount this memory, I feel that recurring pain that comes in my anus, more toward the right side, that I often get when I "tell" or "recall" memories of the memories ritual abuse in nature.

That's enough I think – to provide a window into what I experienced. I feel no need to go into all of my journals, my notes, and to look at it all over again. I truly do not know how I survived. It is beyond belief to me that I can be this whole, this functional, and to have survived all the images, thoughts, feelings and emotions associated with such horror stories going through my system not just once, but many times as I remembered and re-remembered rescuing each and every bit of me out of trauma time to orient them into present time. This must be a part of my destiny. I conclude this chapter with sharing a chunk of writing that helped me in the initial processing of the horrors that provides a good feel for the degree of fragmentation my system created to survive. In reading it, I own that it comes across as madness, and in

the moment, I own that I myself was not mad, but the situations I was in, definitely were.

The writing process I used was to allow different parts of my psyche (different alters) to weigh in on the situation and to begin the journey of finding a way to cooperate and communicate with each other. To work towards peace, harmony, and flow – which we miraculously now have! There may be some tussles of indecision, but basically, our struggles are no different than anyone else experiencing the ups and down of what life brings us in the course of living life and pursuing our dreams.

Conversation amongst my selves

(I am not signing it...why? I don't want to, I want to be dead? Who are you. Teeny Tiny voice. I don't like this planet, I don't like what people do to people here. I refuse to sign it.

HEY

What about us.

This is our body too

Disappear

Well..

What could you agree to.

Can't I choose to exit?

We could have a funeral

Can I raise her from the dead?

O.k. what happened here?

We lost it.

What were we here for? A life contract and someone doesn't want to sign it. They want to disappear. Well first, who is that someone? Tiffany? Nope. I don't have a name. I never get noticed, I never get heard, I never get seen, I never get nothing.

You must get something,

Or else?

I wouldn't exist-exactly

I am confused

M.you are always confused. I NOT M. I rachel.

Sorry...lets see

You never get nothing. You must have gotten something to feel this way.

Silence

I can't tell.

Why not.

Then M. will side with me.

With what?

Death.

Isn't that what you want?

Yes.

Well?

Well what?

I am scared.

Scared of what?

Dying.

What happens when you die?

It hurts.

What else?

You hurt other people?

What else?

The devil comes all dressed up with horns and an ugly mask and a pitch fork, and smoke, and incense

Is this shaundra? Yes

Its time to get

We have five more minutes,

Shaundra.

Talk some more.

What else happens.

The coffin opens up and they put you inside

With creepy crawly things and (S. told me I had a nightmare last week of get them off of me)

The inside is purple satin with little buttons on it. I wished they were pink buttons but they weren't. and then what?

And then they sit you up and rise you from the dead and tie your hands together and they sit on your head and shit on you. And then they get in the coffin..one by one. And make you suck their dicks, and then they make you suck their pussy's and then they make you hold a doll. A baby doll, and get out of the coffin holding the doll, telling you not to drop it. Then they blindfold you and take you somewhere else.

What about the pooop on the head?

I don't know...I just remember waking up somewhere else.

Outdoors, it is cold, and I have blood on me and I have a white shift or something on and I feel older. A lot older. And I don't understand where I have been and how I could be bigger all of a sudden. How old were you before? I was about 8 or 9. How old were you later? About 16, are you sure. No I am not sure. This feels good. I don't feel like dying much anymore. I don't feel like it, I feel faint. I think I could sign the life contract. But don't forget me, I have more to say.

M. notes...she goes to cover my eyes and the body jerks and I see a flash when I close my eyes and feel the shudder...and boy was that hard..I think I'll print this out..

Home from therapy

Rock and roll explosion

Out of it at arrival, want to curl up in ball, hard get out of car, everything slow motion, eat apple, dig out nuts that fell, eat from bottom of backpack, dirty, don't care, taste good. Stand dazed looking not knowing what looking at. New Yorker. Seeing New Yorker. Look for issue didn't find. Cold. Me cold in this room. Jump time. Jump time experience jump time. In office of therapist C. She asks about message. Didn't remember the message I left her. The rat memory. Cynthia came out. Only had part of memory. She drew a picture. I was sitting on couch outside of office. Opening and closing different journals. Different journals for different people. Different things go in different journals, and not putting things in wrong journals. Inside office. Didn't remember calling. Voice sounded same, felt different, didn't feel different. All feels like me, M. Cynthia draws name and age and where. Cynthia. 12. E. beach. I wonder is that her true age, or some age she thinks she is...am I (she really older or younger), her mouth is watering, her neck is tight, her shoulders are scrunched up to her ears.

She draws flames in her eyes, and acknowledges she doesn't have a lot of the memory, her mouth is watering, there is a memory of the campfires the family would make and eating at the beach, but she doesn't communicate this, I communicate this later. Switch, someone else writes with hard scrawls. Writes of 1967, the station wagon, the box with hitchhiker, the body dead, raped by Mr. P. The boat that picks it up. Cutting the body up, why no blood, dumping the body in the ocean, back in the boat. Time shifts. Not sure it is all connected to one memory, perceived by storyteller as one time and seems confusing, disorienting. The murder is separate event from cult event. I feel better writing this down. Maybe if I had written it down, it wouldn't come up again, we send someone up to interpret the scrawls, and let M. out to talk about the journal entry from this morning. We at first (rachel?) can't focus on the lettering. M. verifies that the material seems like it has come up before. She takes a brief interlude and talks about how these parts have their own agenda, Time Share in the body, and all that kind of stuff. She talks about her dreams, something different, never ever being able to get to the top of the hill, it seeming impossible, focusing on the hill and whammo...

Small voice, witch voice, she doesn't offer a name (Vicky) is offered now. Vicky is (don't tell) Vicky. Hi. Its Tiffany, great job today. Welcome to the family. You are loved, you are accepted, you are a part of us, we want you, we need you, we applaud your bravery, Ditto from M. Ditto from dylan (laughs in group who spelled m.'s name as miso...too funny!!!!) Owie

Not fun story. Vicky was recalling. I was saying that I was out a lot for the ceremonies, I began with pulling the body's hair up, and .. (omitted description) wiping it all over myself. Of helping the Dr. with surgeries, delivering babies. Someone else came out. (ogre?) no. someone who stuttered. No name offered (Phillip) name offered now, Phillip (phillip feels

happy to be acknowledged), Phillip described "witch lady" in halting, stuttering voice, nipples, not his nipples, right nipple with needle through it. Ring. Pull on ring. Have sex with witch lady witch lady like pain. Dr. go in good and work with us. Dr. go in good. No like to push. Sex is a push button (someone else...feeling related to technique of work with her umm...name no someone offer Cathie...with Cathie). Writing helps me process.

Umm...phillip describing needles under fingernails, in toes, for pain. Also. Switch. Seeing something. Someone is in a ball. Starts with right shoulder, twisted and contorted. Someone ties contorted body (who?) LA is the response. LA ties the body M. body up from a tree in ropes. Someone gives her a candy (who?). J. Rakowski. NONONONON!!! NOOOOONONONONON

gives her a lemon drop. He not part. You lie.

Drop it.

Alright. Someone offered. Leave it for now, for the record, we'll sort it out later.

Thanks Tiff!

Notes..last night felt very agitated. Ate a lot. Eating out of control. Back to feeling fat again. Hadn't said that in awhile. Linked to baby memory. Some babies came out of vaginas, some babies came out of cut open, kidnap child prostitutes, pregnant. Vicky recalled L.A. and San Francisco, didn't recall S.B.. argh...that means there is someone else for S.B.? Yup..you guessed it. Fuck!!! I can see how I would never remember. Create one alter for transitions...that part totally amnesic...close to being surface personality...switch in degrees...I think...and the closer in..the more parts would be created to handle the yucky stuff...and they might drop the ball mid-story...almost as if..hard to describe...given a scene...8 or 10 parts may exist. But say, have 3 teams of 8 or 10...and for awhile you may have consistent team player one come out for each event. Then as go in and pass the ball so to speak...the part that was connected to the next step in the process...they might remain the same. But as things got harrier...given an event...the team player for the third task would rotate and not be at each event...and come out...and be doing his task...elsewhere..at another time..but thinking that the memory was all one event...fuck..confusing...I can see how it works..hard to explain it. WOW!!! Humans do amazing things. And these parts did this so that I could live a "normal" enough life.

HARD HARD

Alright, it is hard, but we can have fun along the way (Tif) humor is really important. And I think I'd like to put someone in charge of handing out Flintstone Band-Aids. Who would like that? I would! no name offered. No name offered. Shake of head. Grin growly. No name me no name no name.

Sounds familiar. Come on, everyone has a name. NO NAME. O.k. you are no name. Pie in the face no name whip cream thrower lover. YUP. I know all of you (Gabriel)

Chapter Three: Hello Buddha!

I would like to begin bringing this PTSD/DID recovery memoir series to a close by considering why, in hindsight, shedding the structure of religion needed to happen in order to heal, and how, finding a sense of spirituality that worked for me became an important part of the journey. In my experience, abusers were affiliated with multiple communities, as reported by the aspects from their many perspectives. Spiritual communities were also a part of this. Both the Catholic Church as well as people affiliated with the born again, charismatic Christian movement. Before I became conscious of the trauma, it always perplexed me, a family member's commentary about how the churches did not use "discernment", and that people affiliated with religions that include victimizing innocent children went to church. Now that I am conscious, I understand why. Perpetrators went to church with me. The church activity was a cover up, is my sense of what occurred. Also, people in churches were affiliated with perpetrating communities. I can see now, why cutting off ALL contact from my family for a decade, and also, completely dis-engaging from all organized religion, as well as grounding into communities other than communities with similar trauma templates was imperative for my recovery.

In my experience, the language of the religion was, in and of itself, a structure that kept me imprisoned. Additionally, the way scripture verse was used; it served as a form of brain washing that prevented my mind from questioning and seeking answers from anything other than the bible, or the church leaders. In essence, in such a situation, one gives away their own spiritual power as well as ones own connection with the divine: two key elements, in my experience, that were necessary to access for my own healing journey. This may not hold true for other victims that enter the flow of healing and make the shift to survivor, but it was true for me. The religion, and how perpetrators used it, ensured that my mind held rigidly to dogma, and didn't leave much opportunity for thinking for myself. Ironically, it was the counsel of a Christian counselor to leave my first long term relationship, and go back to school, that was the counsel that led to taking action to seek out an education. If one is someone who hungers for knowledge, and is in an academic setting, the mind begins to consider what is outside of the rigid dogma of shaping an entire life around what is written in a single book – the bible.

My religion, in essence, became my practice as an artist, which transposes into having the courage to embrace passion and play, and pursuing my dreams – allowing this path to be my vehicle for metamorphosis. In present time I view myself as a mystic agnostic that is very much aware that there is great mystery, vibrancy, and creative energy that some might label as G-d, which I choose not to label or box in in that labels and boxes tend to

limit the potential for discovery. I observe the irony, that while steeped in religion, I actually was not able to live a life like Christ lived because of the nature of dogma, and that having the courage to shed religion has made me a much more tolerant person capable of accepting the diversity of life with the ability to love and accept who comes across my space for who they are, independent of their religious persuasion. I still experience and engage with spirit in terms of meditation and intuitively knowing when a friend is going through something, and sending them positive energy, but it is not a part of any formal religion. The spiritual practices that resonate best with where I am have to do with mindfulness and meditation.

In addition to the cognitive component, learning to think for oneself, and connecting to one's personal spiritual essence, there is the factor in Christianity of fear. In my experience, it was a fear-based religion. If one's spiritual container is one ruled by fear this serves to reinforce the very thing that imprisons the suppressed aspects of the self as well as holds the body in tension, as pockets of the self lie in the flesh in suspended fight/flight, waiting to be released from being stuck in fear. It takes spiritual energy, in my experience, to recovery. If your spiritual container is fear based, it serves to keep one imprisoned, and in my experience, was a definite barrier to entry into the healing flow. With that said, I imagine that there are other thrivers where this was not the case, but it was for me. I needed to completely abandon fear-based dogma and quest for truth in order for the healing flow to be ignited in my being.

Shedding Outdated Belief Systems

The deepest layers I have been processing have led me to dig deep to chase out root belief systems that no longer serve my present moment well. It is amazing to me how such paradigms can exist, and one can live life unaware that they still impact your day-to-day living. The healing task becomes, in part, about expanding one's awareness and choosing to shift. It takes a willingness to examine one's thoughts, feelings, emotions, and behaviors and putting effort into redefining, shedding, letting go, and putting new paradigms into practice.

For instance, last year I took time to consider the Ten Commandments, that were a part of one of the religions I was brought up with and replaced them with something that resonated with me. It was shocking to me, to think that this was once relevant to me, and realizing that this was simply something that did once serve my journey. When it no longer served the journey, it is best to shed, and seek something fresh for the next phase of living. I found a set of precepts that resonated well with me, and my strong connection with Mother Nature, and juxtaposed the two, and consider them now and again.

*Treat the Earth and all that dwell thereon with respect.
Remain close to the Great Spirit.*

*Show great respect for your fellow beings.
Work together for the benefit of humankind.
Give assistance and kindness wherever needed.
Do what you know to be right.
Look after the well being of mind and body.
Dedicate a share of your efforts to the greater good.
Be truthful and honest at all times.
Take full responsibility for your actions*

In the past few years, as mentioned earlier in this chapter, I've discovered something called the principles of conscious leadership, and in that, pursuit of my life work as a creative, in part, serves as a container for my spiritual growth, integrating these principles into our community's creative and organizational processes has become a guiding force. Additionally, the words of Mahatma Gandhi, and the life he lived, as well as the life of Martin Luther King, these had strong influences on my spiritual being.

I am aware that different aspects hold different spiritual views, and that the body/mind/soul/spirit is flexible enough, expansive enough, to hold these multiple perspectives. For instance myself, as one of the main "front parts" of the system, tends to resonate with the poetry of Rumi, Eastern Philosophy, Bon Buddhism meditation and mother nature practices, and enjoy when my spouse plays recordings of the metaphysical entertainer Alan Watts. I enjoy taking in the work of Louise Hay, weekly oracle card readings by. I have 3 decks of my own oracle cards and from time to time will be present with them to pull from the decks and consider looking at my life in a way I wouldn't otherwise. I've even gone as far, one day out of boredom in the office, to teach myself how to look at my aura, and discovered it to be blue. Other aspects of myself are still very much attached to Christ consciousness and Baby Jesus and very much like the comfort of the belief in guardian angels. One thing all parts universally agree on, is that we are free from the terror of dying and going to hell because we don't believe in one narrow view and follow the rules, regulations, and guidelines of a single religion/faith.

Embracing Diversity

In this state of wholeness, there is acceptance with regard to my own personal diversity. While I as M., really don't identify with any gender, and my sexual orientation is towards who I happen to be committed to in the moment, I do know that the Dylan aspect of myself definitely identifies with male energy and refers to his part as "him." I am aware that there are aspects of me that identify with feminine energy, but not necessarily as a woman. For now, I interpret the net effect of this as being free from association with gender. I have female genitalia, but my genitalia and sexual organs do not define my gender identity. In terms of sexuality, there are some male aspects inside that are attracted to women, but it isn't anything the system would ever

act on, in that we are in a 26 year committed relationship with a straight male, so our sexual preference is, to be intimate ONLY with this individual in both body and mind.

In this state of wholeness, there is acceptance that to be fully me, it runs the gamut. There will be times when I present as a kid and commit to playtime with gusto, there are times that I take to philosophizing, there is the worker bee persona that presents as a professional in a field un-related to my work as a creative, there are moments when my preference for dress is masculine, and other times feminine, there are times when I am distinctly the dancer and producer and there are times when I am distinctly the visual artist, or musician, or organizer. There are little bursts, like fireworks, when I become the aspect that loves to lean and organize, or the part that loves to make animal sounds and plays with the cat, or loves to jump and bounce like a four year old. I need to sing, I need to dance, I need to perform, I need to be spiritual, I need to create, I need to write, I need to make sense of the world around me, I need to be a groundbreaker and a visionary to be all of me.

Fundamentally I truly believe, that to be human holds the potential to be incredibly diverse. Because of my life experiences, I may be a tad more diverse than others, and I see this as a tremendous asset rather than a liability. To have a multifaceted wonder order is NOT a disability, it is not a liability, it is a HUGE asset if you consider what this multifaceted condition has enabled me to not only achieve in life, but how it has helped me to relate with myself and with others.

The degree of empathy, and ability to be present with whatever comes up in the moment, and experience it without much judgment, or be aware that I am judging something is an incredible asset to have. Because of my ability to embody/honor/own multiple perspectives, this enables me to consider the different facets of any puzzle that presents itself to be sorted out and probably contributes to my ability to be a really great problem solver.

I think what really helped me make the shift towards reframing the Disorder in DID to Wonder Order was an experience working with a young musician with a chromosome deletion “disorder” that caused her to be without spoken language. The way she communicates is through music, and sound, vocalizations. Her parents brought her into the studio, and we improvised together. It shattered my conception of “disabled.” It caused me to shift my own conception of my condition and see the wonder of it all. Rather than frame how people are different than the norm as a disability, I see it as an asset, a gift of diversity, and a dynamic that contributes to creating a rich world.

In considering the Merriam Webster definition of disorder I consider the following simple definition of “disorder”

“A confused or messy state: a lack of order or organization a state or situation in which there is a lot of noise, crime, violent behavior, etc.

Medical: a physical or mental condition that is not normal or healthy.”

From within the condition, my experience is that it was a NORMAL reaction to the life experiences. It enabled me to cope and it enabled me to survive which is a HEALTHY reaction. Rather than frame it as something that is “wrong”, “not normal”, or “unhealthy”, I frame it as an apt reaction to life experiences that is completely normal. An extremely healthy way to organize in response to repeated exposure to repeated extreme abuse. I managed to grow, develop, receive an education, develop skills, while tidily organizing the trauma into sub-compartments until a time when I felt safe to process. When the time came to become aware, the system unraveled, and yes, there was much chaos, but chaos is a part of the creative process, and it takes not only a great deal of chaos, but creativity to process repressed trauma, its affiliated emotions, its many, many, many perspectives with regard to the “story”, as well as the associated conditions of panic, anxiety, and depression.

Chapter Four: Tools that Supported the Journey

Healing became a process of cultivating an awareness of the totality of my human experience. Following is an exhaustive list of the healing modalities that supported my recovery, as well as the books I read I found useful, and a brief overview of the key elements that provided the framework for the process.

Professional Support

Therapy – Jungian, Cognitive, Somatic, Talk

I've worked with eight different therapists and counselors. I am fortunate to have had resources for this. I feel deeply for those who do not. I feel really deeply. Presently, my care team is covered by insurance. Initially, my partner paid for everything, and invested around \$6,000 in 1994-96 dollars for out of pocket therapy. He then drew a boundary and encouraged me to take responsibility for my own care, which was a loving thing to do, I see that now, and it was very good for me to take steps at not being totally dependent, but to take care of myself. The first therapist specialized in treatment of ritual abuse.

I didn't stay with her very long. I did not want anyone who might "fish" for information in that I was keenly aware of this view of "false memory syndrome" and didn't want anything to impact that. Things have shifted, and my sense is, researchers know a bit more, and that this notion of "false memory syndrome" is largely debunked.

Indeed, I loved working with this therapist, and her wonderful little dog Maggie, who often comforted me. Therapy became a way of trying to contain the flashbacks to sessions. I went twice a week. Initially, what would happen is as soon as I would enter her office, and sit on her couch, my different parts would tumble out and it was about me, as the host, being in complete and total shock about the stories, the sensations, the flashbacks. This worked well until she began to ask me leading questions, and given the buzz I had been hearing about false memory syndrome, I didn't want to work with a therapist who asked leading questions. Also, in that my partner was not all that happy with her style, and he was footing the bill, he encouraged me to find someone else. I did accomplish this. This woman talked me into being interviewed for her educational pursuits, and used me as a case study for her doctoral dissertation. In hindsight, that felt really inappropriate given where I was in my recovery process – the first six months. For this project, I ordered and read her thesis. I remember receiving what she had written and being too overwhelmed to respond. At that time, it felt very far from what I had expressed in the interview. When I read her final product for this project I was shocked. She made reference to my drawing and indicated that Christ figures made into women were repeated themes that were signs of the goddess. Complete B.S. I

have the drawings, each and every one of them, and this is simply not true. I am grateful for the record of where I was in process, to express the positive, and see that although she changed the host's first name, she retained the names of my alters at that time, but I was deeply saddened by how she warped my experience to serve her dissertation.

The second was a Jungian therapist, who worked very well initially, and we did some really deep work. I learned from her to trust that the universe supported my journey, and remember a beautiful hawk showing up in her yard, and her expressing, that is the universe supporting your journey. We worked through some cover memories; memories that were really bizarre, that I did not know at that time were created by trickery and illusions. Her belief in this reality, and in my parts stories, was what I needed in the moment to process. It was at this time my spouse indicated he could no longer afford the \$150 sessions, and I was intending to drop therapy, when the therapist offered to work with me on a sliding scaled. When I came back from a ritual abuse survivor conference, greatly triggered, she gave me no warning and told me she could no longer see me on a sliding scale. I was, of course, devastated, and in hindsight, a really inappropriate way to drop a client – from my perspective. With that said, I fully understand that the very best thing anyone can do is put on their own oxygen mask first and choose activity that best suits the soul – regardless of previous commitments.

There was a short stint with another therapist, that helped me individually, but when my spouse was brought in for couples counseling, the dynamic shifted, and I felt as if she was consistently siding with my spouse's perspective. I am ashamed to admit some aspect became so angry with her that we chucked a cup of water into her face. Our relationship abruptly ended. In hindsight, I trust my parts; there was probably something about this relationship that was "unsafe" and not in the best interest of our healing trajectory. At a dance concert season this past spring I had an episode of peace making and approached her to thank her for contributing to my process. The one lingering memory is the appreciation for the aesthetic of her office – beyond that, nothing significant - simply a container to process safely. I understand now that I never bonded with either my mother or my father in the type of way babies bond with loving parents. It was a bond through pain, betrayal, with all trust broken. I had not yet learned to connect with people at this point in my life.

The third therapist I worked with was pursuing her PsyD and offered a blend of talk therapy and cognitive therapy. We managed a very large chunk of work together, although I have no recollection of what the work was, I just know it was a start at the ability to connect, and I felt affection and connection perhaps for the first time with a therapist. I have vivid memories of her riding with me in an ambulance during my one and only psychotic break and feel, as a part of this process, that it would be good to reconnect with her and gain her sense of my journey. I had a period of "forced integration" after working with

her. My spouse took me to see a psychiatrist recommended by his father, and in his office full of triggering images, he boldly told me that Dissociative Identity Disorders did not exist and therefore I could not have this condition. At this phase in my process my present partner and I were separating. He made it clear that he was no longer interested in a monogamous relationship. He was also not sure he wanted to be with me the rest of his life. Both were deal breakers for me. In moving out on my own I desperately needed stability and forced myself to “integrate”, or more aptly, I put a cap on processing in order to be able to function to work full time. I continued to work with my psychiatrist and who had advised I STOP therapy, feeling as if I did not need to look at my past any more. Additionally there were three couples counselors (which I did not find very effective), two short stints with other talk therapists, and my present therapist who specializes in somatic therapy that I have worked with for 2 ½ years. Each form of therapy I engaged in served what I needed in the moment. If one form of therapy isn’t working for you, switch it up! Not all matches are the best matches and it may take more than one go to find a good fit for your recovery process.

Psychiatry

I’ve worked with three different psychiatrists. I went to see a psychiatrist early in my recovery process, and told him that at that time, I wanted to attempt to work through my issues without medication. Eight or so years into the journey I had a stress induced psychotic break and I wound up back in his office by way of a psychiatrist who had no idea what was going on with me. Medication support became a part of my journey. Initially I accepted the Dr.’s support unquestionably and he did an excellent job of working with me and being a positive presence in my life. At one point my journey had reached an impasse, and I felt as if his view of me wasn’t accurate, and that I needed an accurate diagnosis to achieve my wholeness goals. I followed the advice of my present therapist and switched psychiatrists and received a diagnosis that felt relevant to my experience. All parts of me REALLY like this individual. Presently I no longer use pharmaceuticals. When he suggested an antidepressant during the period where I was coming to terms with my sister’s corroboration, and the cyclical blues that came with the fall and winter, my intuition prompted me to research the use of cannabis to treat PTSD. After educating myself I decided to give it a go and it WORKED! When I discussed this with my psychiatrist he was very supportive of a more natural route and gave me a referral to a Dr. for medical marijuana. I wish I had known many years ago about the benefits of cannabis and use this in periods when I feel a drop in mood that lasts for a durations longer than a few days. It is also excellent for sleep during the times of the year when my system is a bit more agitated due to anniversaries of particular bad happenings.

Finding My Own Way

In addition to professional support from therapists and psychiatrists a huge chunk of work occurred outside the office. Generally I went to therapy once a week, and upped it to twice a week during periods of high stress. In the other times, the process of cultivating awareness continued. Here is an exhaustive list of the elements that supported the journey well.

- Enrolling in an MFA program rather than admitting myself to a psych ward, setting the intention to let art heal
- Pursuing my dreams/passions/interests
- Drawing
- Painting
- Dance training: ballet, contemporary dance, floor barre, improvisation, composition
- Choreographing
- Performance
- Journaling
- Poetry and creative writing
- Deprogramming writing process – I discovered this posted somewhere on the Internet, and cannot locate the source, unfortunately. The individual suggested to keep a journal and every day, for a number of months, write the date, your name, and a positive memory. I wrote both my birth name and my current legal name. POWERFUL!
- Morning pages
- Burning old journals, sending letters to perpetrators and burning those
- Singing/Songwriting
- Yoga - I felt as if Ashtanga yoga played a very important role in opening my body up. There was so much tension I needed a rigorous practice at that time to work through the tension, and with this, much emotional release.
- Tai Chi
- Gigong
- Physical therapy
- Massage therapy
- Cranial sacral therapy
- Light therapy - When I suspected that my diagnosis of bi-polar was incorrect I began to do research about how to cope with the depressive component of my condition, and observed, that my mood tended to drop in the fall. I suspected Seasonal Affective Disorder might be contributing to my condition. With my psychiatrists oversight I weaned off of anti-depressants substituting light therapy for this. I presently use cannabis for drops in mood and also for help with sleep.

- Meditation/Mindfulness - There is an ABUNDANCE of free mindfulness exercises and guided meditation out there on the Internet. I've benefited greatly from these resources. Bon Buddhism was particularly helpful when it came to processing the deep shame and fathomless emotional pain. It was the only thing actually that brought release. I love that this methodology encourages a nature practice!
- Ho'oponopono forgiveness meditation
- Tapping, also known as EFT, Emotional Freedom Technique – This process was particularly helpful when processing panic, terror, fear, anger, and depression. I would create playlists by topic of what I was dealing with to have them handy when I needed something in an emergency. I particularly benefited from Brad Yates free YouTube videos as well as one directed toward overcoming depression produced by tapping.com.
- Reboot Your Brain series – this was particularly helpful when attempting to re-program my mind and continues to be a favorite morning meditation. I don't know why it worked so well for me. I found it on YouTube and also posted to the creator's website. <http://www.rebootyourbrain.com.au/>
- Positive Affirmations – particularly Louis Haye's love meditation at bedtime, as well as making my own pertinent to what I was processing in the moment, using my own voice and overlaying soundscapes that I intuitively felt would be of support. A recent series I made I simply took a video camera and pointed it out towards the ocean and read the affirmations I wanted to work on. Its wonderful to have images of kids playing with parents, dogs walking by, the sound of the waves, couples strolling hand in hand.
- Sound healing – in particular, shamanic drumming, listening to different tones to clear chakras, different tones for clearing what I sought to clear, binaural beats were VERY helpful with depressed days.
- TAT® - Tapas Accupressure Technique
- EMDR – self-administered free videos on YouTube. This was very good for the moments at work when I was triggered and ungrounded. I particularly benefited from the video with smiley faces posted by Jerry Bacik. <https://youtu.be/rcxVud2XZw0>
- Grounding items – very good for moments at work when I was triggered. Special rocks, bits of art, flowers, and things that smelled nice.
- Scents and sprays – lavender, various scented sprays, very well for the moments when I was triggered at work.
- Online-guided sleep hypnosis

- Online guided healing meditations
- Stress Proof Your Brain Series by Rick Hanson – excellent!
- Online support group for survivors – Ivory Garden Attending a conference for Ritual Abuse Survivors – pivotal!
- Exercise and spending time in nature.
- Art Adventures with the creative community I engage with
- Building ego strength with each small success as an artist and producer, in the work field.
- Support from the critters in my life. They are incredible healers and supporters when dealing with the effects of trauma.

Books That Were Of Support

The first chunk of healing

- Shadow Dance by David Richo – got me pondering what I might have in the shadow of my psyche.
- The Artist's Way by Julia Cameron – concrete creativity tools
- The Courage to Heal by Ellen Bass and Laura Davis
- Trauma and Recovery by Judith Lewis Herman, MD
- Safe Passage to Healing by Chrystine Oksana – very helpful when Ritual Abuse trauma was being processed
- Feel the Fear and Do it Anyways by Susan Jeffers
- The Soul's Code by James Hillman

The second chunk of healing

- An Unquiet Mind by Kay Redfield Jamison – helped me see clearly that the diagnosis of bi-polar was NOT a good match
- Coping with Trauma Related Dissociation by Suzette Boon, Kathy Steele, Onno van der Hart (Author) – still working with this book
- Waking the Tiger by Peter A. Levine
- Becoming Yourself, Overcoming Mind Control and Ritual Abuse by Alison Miller – I would not have been able to effectively manage processing the mind control layer without this information, in particular, tips from survivors on how they coped, what they learned.
- Ritual Abuse and Mind Control: The Manipulation of Attachment Needs Kindle Edition by Orit Badouk Epstein, Joseph Schwartz, Rachel Wingfield Schwartz
- Journal of Trauma & Dissociation: Guidelines for Treating Dissociative Identity Disorder in Adults, Third Revision, International Society for the Study of Trauma and Dissociation

- The Gift of Fear by Gavin de Becker

Chapter Five: Thrive

Recipe For Thrive

One thing I have learned from the visual arts is that there are as many ways to make a drawing as there are visual artists, there are as many ways to make a dance as there are choreographers, and there are as many ways to organize a community of artists as there are organizers. The human condition is incredibly individuated, as if each human is their own orbit, and my impression is, that there are as many paths to awareness, healing, restoration, realizing one's truest life purpose as there are humans alive on this not so functional planet within a glorious cosmos.

Each survivor ultimately finds his or her own path. I do not believe there is one definitive path to wholeness. While one healing modality may work well for one, it may not resonate for another. What I do believe holds most honest/authentic is that survivors can indeed learn from the experiences from fellow survivors, especially those who have obtained a state of thrive – those who have processed the gnitty gritty of their respective hells and are living fulfilling lives. What also holds true/authentic is that we can also learn from the research that has been conducted and the wisdom of the healers that have worked with survivors of extreme trauma. A final aspect that I think may be a constant, although survivors may not be aware of it, is that once one enters the healing flow, the body/mind/spirit will naturally seek to work its way back to an integrated/balanced state. In essence, like making a dance, one can trust the process.

Like a creative performance, it all comes together in the end, and at some point, the dance seemingly makes itself with a great deal of effort on the dance makers behalf. It is as if the completed dance already exists, and ones own actions ignite the energy of change facilitating the eventual manifestation in this dimension. A human life can be seen as a dance to me, and in some dimension of time and space, the whole remade you already exists. The first step may require tossing out the whole deck you were dealt in life, and remaking the deck, or the entire game/approach to life even, but the potential is there. It is up to the individual to say yes to the process, it is up to the community to be there, to provide the safe support and offer the panoply of ideas, options, healing resources to restore the harm done.

In reflecting on my path, I came up with an outline of the key factors that supported my path – which is my process. I realized, it could be seen as a recipe for thrive, which I would like to share the gyst of, and leave fleshing this out for a journal article, or another book perhaps. May it add to the other stories of other survivors enjoy the land of thrive.

Commit to the Journey, Let Go, Enjoy that the Support You Need Manifests

Do NOT allow the image of victim or survivor becomes your primary sense of self, ego identity, quest for deeper meaning and purpose in your life and let that become your source of ego strength.

Hang out with FUNCTIONAL people who are living a life doing what they love to do. These may or may not be people who are interested in what you love to do. Have an active social life and, if at all possible, an active work life. Quest for information and understanding and trust your instinct/gut/intuition.

Choose whatever healing modalities resonate with you most. Let your intuition be your guide and seek out information where your heart leads.

Ground into your healing journey and seek support when you need it from other thrivers and survivors.

Celebrate your small successes and your big successes. Make time for being in nature, rest, and beauty.

When you feel as if you are nearly there – chunk out your memoir.

For myself, so much of the journey has been about getting toxic energies, stories, emotions, and experiences OUT OF my system and into another form. If aspects could put the negative/dark energies into expression on paper this energy was released away from and out of the body into a life form separate from the self. When an experience became transposed into a gesture or an entire dance, the act of performing it in front of witnesses became a sacred form of telling. When the audience connects with it energetically the shamanic and cathartic nature of art takes place and one finds great energetic and emotional release as what you have bottled up inside finds a healthy conduit of expression. Gets it out of one's own personal space and connects with community and even deeper, with the collective. When tortured and tormented and threatened to be killed if one ever told about your experiences, telling becomes a primal way of taking one's power back. I've already shared my memoir process, but it seems appropriate to include the outline once again here.

Following is how I went about chunking out my memoir project.

STEP ONE: Just chunk it out without editing. Write, write, write - don't worry about grammar.

STEP TWO: Let it simmer, let it rest, and come back to it when you feel you are ready. Mine rested for ten years before I was ready to come back to it.

STEP THREE: Begin the crafting process. For me it was relatively easy because of my experience as a choreographer, which is all about shaping and

structuring. I sent chapters as they emerged to close friends who served as cheerleaders and also offered tips/thoughts/ideas. At this time, it might be helpful to connect with other writers and solicit ideas. I joined an online group and gleaned oddles of supportive and free support.

STEP FOUR: Edit, edit, edit. Read, re-read, use the spell and grammar check in your word processing programming. Once you think you have it, print it out. Edit some more. If you don't have the energy to edit, and get fed up, just move forwards in the process to get the work out of your consciousness and into the ethers. A big act of letting go.

STEP FIVE: Design your book cover. I wasn't interested in marketing the book, just getting it out there, and opted to design my own book cover. Presently I enjoy the free design program called Canva.

STEP SIX: Self-publish! Easy and free! I chose, the first round to use Kindle Direct Publishing. Second round I test out SmashWords. I published one episode, as much as I could muster, then published the second. If you want to just publish for the process, you can set the price high, then it is out there, but one is relatively safe in terms of discovery because finding your book on Amazon, or SmashWords, unless you are a whiz at marketing, is not very probable.

STEP SEVEN: Oh goodness! For me it really stirred things up, and I found myself back in the healing flow. I would counsel, if you were taking on a memoir project, to be in therapy.

STEP SEVEN: Enjoy your success at telling your story.

NINE: Let go and Re-purpose

This is the phase I am in right now. Because my primary identity has NOT been that of a survivor, but has been about many other things, letting go seems to be organically manifesting, in part, with this book project. At some point in your journey of cultivating awareness, processing repressed trauma and stories, making peace with all of who you are, living life in an integrated flow, perhaps even achieving a fused personality state – at some point, the trauma drama of it all will not take ALL of your energy. There will energy for other things. When energy for other things arise – a good time to focus on doing what you love to do. I managed to sustain that throughout the process, but I get that this journey can be debilitating. My first step at letting go and re-purposing energy was to write a little something (which I will close this book with) and email it to a few of my closest friends, who sent back loving notes of congratulations. I had had a decade of relative calm and was fully engaged in other things, and I imagine I will enjoy more of that, but wonder what else the universe may hold for me. There is also a deep profound awareness of parts and experiences yet to be processed and integrated.

When I reflect upon the key things that enabled me to escape the influences of my perpetrators I can see it had to do with following my

intuition and following my dreams. The first test was, at 19, being given the choice to go to church, or keep my art commitment. I moved out and became independent, and had little contact with my family. The next test, I saved and went to live abroad a year and pursued my dream to study mime in Paris. I had a year free from all influences from my perpetrators. The next test, my parents did NOT want me to marry whom I did, and although he was a schmuck, in that they boycotted the wedding, I was probably doing the right thing – getting away from their influences. The next test, when I believe I was scheduled to go back into activity with the perpetrators, I defied my parents and sold everything I owned to return to Europe to study at a theater school, and again, a summer of no connection to family and beginning to sense that I had a different path, and owning, there was much deceit in me as a person. The next test, I let go of the container of religion. I let truth be my mantra. This was my first step towards deprogramming. At this time I also questioned, what is in my shadow? The next test, when I wanted to know why I was beginning to lose it, I listened to my intuition, my gut, and my heart. It told me, you need to cut out ALL CONTACT WITH ALL FAMILY – and I did, I divorced everyone for a solid decade, and processed, then slowly began to put out feelers sorting out who seemed safe and who didn't. The biggest tests, choosing to pursue my passion, enroll as a dance major and go on and get an MFA in the arts. It became my healing path. If I were to shrink-wrap it to just ONE thing? ONE sentence?

Quest the integrity of your soul's path, listen to your intuition and take right action following this impulse, trust the process – the universe supports your journey.

Celebrating Thrive

In this moment – I've just completed chunking out all that I want to say, and my parts affirm, although there is always more to share, we've done our part in raising awareness through sharing our story. It is quiet in the house, I am alone, but I am never alone, because of my incredibly rich internal family. I conclude this monumental project with a declaration Dylan sent to a handful of friends. A declaration of wholeness and thrive.

Thrive

I did it! or should i say we as i did it!

Survive to thrive

A bit of fine tuning,
There may be flare-ups now and again,
But as an inner/outer tribe it is done/complete/whole

A journey that began over 23 years ago

In therapy yesterday, when I guessed, maybe another 2 1/2 years? she laughed - "not much longer is my guess," she countered

My inner/outer community is outgrowing the need for a psychiatrist as well

Labels used for diagnostic purposes/treatments shed

Multiple personality disorder which morphed into dissociative identity disorder, post traumatic stress disorder, panic, anxiety, depression, bipolar (which was inaccurate)

One dr. even anal enough to suggest, "i don't know what's wrong with her, schizoid? she comes from a family of schizophrenics (so inappropriate! grrrr)"

Shred, shred, shred - repurpose

Take heart, have courage, process

And in the moment i embrace

A unique perspective on what i have evolved into

Therapy sessions of late are mostly about relationship, boundaries, trying to sort out WHAT DO I CALL MYSELF? What gender do i relate to? do i stay or do i go? how can i manifest being economically self-sufficient? the pain of separation from my tribe with all of us living in different places/spaces. the bread and butter gig challenges

To think

23 years ago

Layer one - some 35 parts and splinters - 10 years of processing mostly therapy and art.. then no therapy and a big push in my dance career - focus on building ego energy

Return to memoir, write the Chameleon Chronicles, sh-t hits the fan, back in therapy for 2 1/2 years, insistence on a new psychiatrist.

SUCH A TOUGH LAYER! REALLY TOUGH and understanding the poetry of why the system waited. Without the advancement of the field, and somatic therapy, i don't think i could have processed this.

This layer two - another batch of parts and splinters - nearly destroys my relationship with this boyfriend/spouse/landlord of 25 years on again off again cycle of being together.

Who i am now - I don't use the term integrated - but rather - a multifaceted wonder mending with permanent cracks and bits and pieces obliterated and missing here and there. Although my totality toys with the feasibility of a "fused" personality state - only further exploration will reveal how it all sorts out.

Yesterday the decision was - genderless - no identity with any particular gender or sexual orientation which is really amazing progress: to think at one point, one aspect of the splintered psyche identified as gay male, another as male and loved looking at girls, the host straight female, and other parts, wanted nothing to do with anything related to humans/gender/sexuality.

I love the color pink of late, but i also love to wear my hair short and love high tops, lots of color for sure, lots of bling, mixing up pants with skirts, dressing playful!

I love my sagging breasts and at times they seem like man boobs to me in that at times i feel strong powerful energy flow through me that culture associates with men

I associate it with being human

My name - in the moment is both D. and M. and i toy with just picking a name in the moment and playfully being that in an experimental way.

My therapist thought, it might be kind of confusing, but in that moment, i thought, i am trying out sophie.

D. means great flow - and this dynamic of who i am is bold, courageous, curious, playful, magical, daring, adventuresome, expansive, a trickster, loves clay, paint, sculpture, installation, performance art, kids, classes, being goofy

M. - was given to me by my current boyfriend/spouse/landlord- and

this dynamic is poetic, writes, dances, fierce intellect, a fighter, pig headed, persuasive, head in the clouds, always imagining, creating, hard worker, determined, a creative genius, compassionate, empathetic, anal retentive, spiritual, a visionary, a manifested

So - celebrate with me won't you?

All of you who have contributed to my healing journey

I did it

Being a survivor of extreme abuse is a thing of the past

I thrive in the now

But truth be told, i am really not sure what comes next

I'm open

And certainly open to suggestions

With love,

MD K.

A doctor in self-healing, a doctorate in self-discovery

To hell and back and I still have a warm heart

Affirmation: we all play on the same team, the healing team, the happy team, any new parts that surface, our happy team shows them how awesome our life is right now and we take them to a safe inner place for re-orientation. We are aware at all times and know how to keep the body safe. All of our front parts listen to our inner parts and do not use denial to create unsafe situations. All of our triggers are processed; they hold no power over us. We are safe, we are free, and we are whole.

May you the reader be whole, may you be healthy, may you be happy, may you be loved. Thanks for listening!

###

About the Author

Dylan's voice

Dylan is the aspect of my whole self that loves art. His work has been shown under the auspices of Dylan & Friends in solo exhibitions in Vienna, New York, and on the West Coast. His website is www.brutifuloutsiderart.us. Ginger Freedom is the pen name for multifaceted wonder order flow. As a total being, the system is passionate about family, friends, pets, travel, and all things creative. What we have gone through in life, although hellacious to process and heal from, NEVER defined who I am. There were some limitations due to the effects of PTSD on my life in terms of what type of employment best served my healing journey, but I modified as I went along and have managed to accomplish many wonderful things never letting a label get in the way of me doing what I love to do. I figured it out!

M.'s voice

The author graduated with highest honors with a degree in dance/business economics from a large university and went on to earn her MFA in the Arts. She began processing the trauma while a dance major in college and continued her educational pursuits while in recovery. Upon graduation she founded a dance company, which has grown into an international arts collective. Additionally, she co-founded its affiliated 501 (c) 3. She has realized many projects with a high degree of success as a dancer, choreographer, visual artist, and producer. She has had solo exhibitions in Vienna, New York, and Santa Barbara. Her choreography has been performed extensively on the West Coast, abroad in Europe, and on the East Coast. Press quotes range from “astonishingly gifted” with the local press to “perfect dance poetics” with international press. She has been active in the field of the arts as a groundbreaker and visionary actively working to shift the paradigm in how the arts organize harnessing principles of conscious leadership in interest of “being the change” she longs for in the world. In addition to her work in the field of the arts, she has chosen for her primary income to come from other sources in order to have the greatest degree of creative freedom as an artist. One of her “bread and butter gigs” was in the field of alternative dispute resolution. She received a certification in mediation and went on to become a published Ombuds author in this field. She has two articles coming out in the next edition of Survivorship, one that reflects on the process, two decades later; and a second, which suggests development of an expanded pain scale pertinent to survivors of extreme trauma. She is currently working on a book project that collates what she has learned from 20 years as a dance maker with hopes that it will become a resource guide for emerging dance makers. She has a dream of establishing “wholeness centers” that serve both as artistic

residencies, and retreat centers for trauma survivors. Her current interest lies in completing her book project and then beginning to channel her energy into pursuing the dream of establishing “wholeness centers.”

Read Ginger's Smashwords Interview at <https://www.smashwords.com/interview/dymondrose>

Other Books By This Author

Please visit your favorite ebook retailer to discover other books by Ginger Freedom:

The Patchwork Chameleon Chronicles

Episode One: Quest

Episode Two: Kharma Krackers

Shorter than Short Stories & Creative Bits and Bobs

The Spider and Violin

Forthcoming

Shorter than Short Stories – To Piss on a Guru. October 2017

Getting Your Work Out into The World, Reflecting on 20 years as a Dance Maker.

January 2017.

Shorter than Short Stories - When an Ombudsman Blows the Whistle, March 2017

Connect with All of Me

I really appreciate you reading my book! Here are my social media coordinates:

Friend the Art Collective I create with on Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/art.bark.5>

Favorite my Smashwords author page: <https://www.smashwords.com/interview/dymondrose>

Subscribe to my writer's blog: <https://playfreshional.wordpress.com>

Visit my community's websites: <http://www.brutifuloutsiderart.us>
<http://www.artbark.org>